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BIOGRAPHICAL MEMOIR

OF

WILLIAM PHELAN, D.D.

BY

JOHN, BISHOP

OF LIMERICK.

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WILLIAM PHELAN, D.D., was born at Clonmel, in the county of Tipperary, on the 29th of April, 1789. His father, Mr. John Phelan, was in narrow circumstances, and of humble station\* ; but with feelings and habits, such as, in England, are rarely to be met with, in the less fortunate portion of society. It is, unhappily, matter of history, that, down to the close of the seventeenth century, changes of property in Ireland, were great, violent, and irretrievable. In the course of those changes, the ancestors of young Phelan were heavy sufferers ; but they cherished the remembrance of the past† ; and in this, and other instances, men, not

\* He was, by trade, a wool-comber.

† A long remembrance : but thus it is in Ireland. The great bulk of the Phelan property was lost, I believe, so early as the twelfth century. — J. L.

much raised above the rank of peasants, were often distinguished by a conscious dignity, wholly independent of, and superior to, mere outward condition. Such was, peculiarly, the case in Clonmel. Many reduced families resided there. To these, was attached a kind of traditional estimation, by persons, in externals, abundantly more prosperous : and their children, not unfrequently, grew up with a sense of personal respectability, and a disposition to re-assume, if they could, what they thought their proper station in society.\* The subject of this memoir, accordingly, was never vulgarized : he was, what his father had been before him, a native gentleman. There ever adhered to him, a

\* The writer cannot help recording a curious fact, which he heard several years ago from Dr. Phelan's own lips. His words were nearly as follows : ' When I was a very little boy, I was invited to attend a funeral. The house in which the people were assembled, was within a short distance of Clonmel, on the banks of the river Suir ; and commanding an extensive prospect, into the county of Waterford. A friar, who happened to be present, drew me apart from the company, (I was then a Roman-Catholic) ; he led me to a bay-window, took me by the hand, and said, ' Look there, look around you, my boy ; those mountains, these valleys, as far as you can see, were once the territory of your ancestors : but they were unjustly despoiled of it.' I never can forget the impression. My young blood boiled in my veins. For the time, I was, in spirit, a rebel. And, I verily believe, if it had not been the good pleasure of Providence, to lead me into other circumstances, and furnish me with better instructors, I might have terminated my life on a scaffold.' — J. L.

self-respect, and a dignity of character, which shrunk from every thing ungenerous and unworthy. And both the example and conversation of his father, were well calculated to confirm his good dispositions. Filial piety, it will appear amply in the sequel, was, with him, almost an instinct ; and it is certain, that, thus to call it forth, there must have been genuine worthiness in the parent. Nor should it be omitted, that the literary aspirations of the youthful student were first nourished beneath the paternal roof. The elder Mr. Phelan was well versed in the Latin language ; and he failed not to impart, where they might prove eventually beneficial, his own classical predilections. But, what was of far more serious consequence, those principles of virtue and goodness were instilled, which, during his short, but exemplary life, never forsook the grateful son : he might, indeed, well say,

‘ Non patre præclaro, sed vitâ et pectore puro :  
Ipse mihi custos incorruptissimus.’ \*

In the year 1796, William was sent to a daily grammar school, in his own immediate neighbour-

\* Admirably transfused and heightened, by the greatest of our later poets : . .

‘ My boast is not, that I deduce my birth  
From loins enthroned, and rulers of the earth ;  
But higher far my proud pretensions rise,  
The son of parents passed into the skies.’

hood. The master, Mr. Michael Ryan, was an expert Latinist ; pedantic, amiable, and enthusiastic. Of general information, indeed, his portion was but scanty ; and he was no Grecian ; but the little that he knew, he imparted with steady, and affectionate sedulity. His pupil ever felt towards him, a strong sense of obligation ; and repeatedly declared, that, to him he was indebted, for the correctness and facility, with which he both wrote and spoke the Latin language. There he remained, between six and seven years ; and, certainly, his time was not misemployed. The business of the school he made, invariably, his grand object. It seemed to be a law of his nature, that the most important things had the first claim on his attention. Matters of daily business once thoroughly mastered, then, and not till then, he felt himself at liberty to look elsewhere for recreation : this he found, in those healthful, manly exercises, which he keenly relished ; but, especially, in those more recondite pursuits, to which, from early youth, he was devotedly attached.\* His gaiety of heart, and buoyancy of spirits, tempered, as they always were, by a certain meditative gravity of mind, were no less delightful to his companions, than they were indicative of his own future eminence.

\* Irish history and antiquities, should, more particularly, be mentioned among his favourite recreations.



While yet a school-boy, he showed strong military propensities ; not, indeed, a predilection for the pomp and circumstance, so much as for the science, of war. He was fond of military evolutions ; and he especially noticed scenery, with reference to the disposition of forces, the selection of commanding posts, and the occupation of important vantage-grounds. From topics of this nature, he was apt, in more advanced life, to borrow illustrations ; but, always, strictly in keeping with the religious character of his mind.

But, that, under Mr. Ryan, his education never could be completed, he well knew. Therefore, both he and his father readily acceded to a proposal, which, about this time, was made to them. It happened, that two of his play-mates \* were about to be sent to the endowed school of Clonmel, then under the direction of the Rev. Richard Carey. Their father good-naturedly suggested, that it would be well, if they were accompanied by their young comrade. To school, accordingly, the three friends proceeded, as day-scholars. This occurred in 1803, when William was about fourteen years of age. The date seems not unworthy to be specified : for this was the great providential

\* The Rev. Samuel, and Rev. Mortimer, O'Sullivan.

turning-point, which determined the direction and character of his future life.

Never, perhaps, was master more beloved and revered by his pupils, than was Mr. Carey. With extensive knowledge, critical acumen, and refined taste, he united the most child-like simplicity of spirit. It was almost impossible to be admitted to his familiar society, (and all his deserving pupils became his private friends,) without growing ‘*lenior ac melior*,’ gentler in manners, and more kind in heart. One who knew him well, has sketched the likeness of this amiable man\* ; with such just, though vivid colouring, that it were injurious to substitute other phraseology than his own :

‘ I have his light and graceful figure’ says my correspondent,† ‘ at this moment before me. His bare and reverend forehead, slightly sprinkled with

\* I, too, had the gratification of meeting Mr. Carey : but it was only once, . . *Virgilium tantum vidi* ! But that once, was enough to satisfy me, that all which I had heard of him, was strictly true. It was in the month of October, 1806, at Darling Hill, in the county of Tipperary, by the invitation of an old pupil of his, the present Mr. Serjeant Pennefather. It gave me singular pleasure, to see the good man. He recalled, almost every moment, the memory of my beloved college friend, JOHN SARGINT : who, in the course of the years 1791, . . 1798, delighted in recording anecdotes, of his school-boy days ; and never failed to speak of his master, Mr. Carey, (who long survived him,) with the most affectionate veneration. — J. L.

† The Rev. S. O’Sullivan.

the snows of time, and his mild countenance radiant with benignity, and sparkling with intelligence. The gentleness, and suavity of his disposition ; the polished courtesy of his manners ; his exact, and discriminative judgment ; his various and profound learning, . . these were scarcely adverted to by his friends, amidst the love and veneration which were inspired, by the richer treasures of his moral nature : by his generous detestation of oppression ; by his noble scorn of every thing mean, or base ; by his fervent piety, his steadfast friendship, his rare disinterestedness, and his deep humility ; by the charity, which prompted him to be liberal, often beyond his means ; and by the singleness of nature, which almost unconsciously realized the gospel rule, ‘ not letting his left hand know, what his right hand did.’ My recollection of William’s first introduction into Mr. Carey’s school, is vivid, as though it took place but yesterday. The good old man was, at that period, gradually withdrawing from active life ; and his attention was limited, to a very small number of pupils. He received, indeed, those only, who were recommended by his personal friends. Of that number, my father had the good fortune to be one. And thence it was, that we were admitted to a trial. From the slovenliness, which, in that part of Ireland, then prevailed in the elementary parts of classical education, Mr. Carey had found it

necessary to establish the general rule, that all who came to him, from other schools, should, however plausible their seeming proficiency, retrace their steps through the Latin grammar. My brother and I, were, from our time of life, (we were a few years junior to our friend,) exempt from all mortification on this score: we were mere beginners; and, of course, were well satisfied to commence at the commencement. Some of the boys, however, officiously told Phelan, of the humiliation which awaited him; no slight one, it will be admitted, to a diligent student of six or seven years' standing, who had been already delighting himself, with the dense eloquence of Tacitus. He reddened, but said nothing. Then came the trial. A book was put into his hands: when such, at once, appeared his grounded knowledge of the Latin language, and so correctly classical was the diction of some exercises which he produced, that, without the least hesitation, Mr. Carey passed him into his highest class. On being asked what he would have done, if relegated to the pages of Lilly, . . 'I should immediately have walked out of the school,' said the high-minded youth, 'and never set my foot into it again?'' \*

\* This early anecdote is highly characteristic. The writer has seen Dr. Phelan under momentary bursts of feeling, which this trait of the Clonmel school-boy powerfully calls to mind. But I have heard, too, his ingenuous confessions of error; his

He was now placed in circumstances, well fitted to unfold his powers. He soon came to revere Mr. Carey ; who stood to him in the relation, not so much of an instructor, as of a parent, and a friend. Under him, in addition to his former acquirements, young Phelan gained a thorough knowledge of Greek : and, what was far better, his genius was kindled, and his taste refined, by constant, familiar intercourse, with a ‘master-spirit.’ A slight, but characteristic incident, will best show the terms on which they lived. One evening, as they were returning towards the school, from a country residence of Mr. Carey’s, Phelan, on passing a particular street, looked up, and said, . . ‘That, Sir, is the house, in which I was born.’ . . ‘Well, my dear William,’ the benevolent man replied, . . ‘I trust, that your fellow-townsmen, will, one day, point out *this* house, with a satisfaction no less lively, but

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humble and contrite submission, in cases where the offence had been purely venial. The truth is, he was intimately known to very few : few, therefore, could enter fully into his character. But, it is no more than justice to bear witness, that his failings, were but the infirmities of a noble mind. His native temperament, indeed, was peculiarly sensitive, and delicate ; and while he strove, habitually, to keep it under due control, some allowance will be made, by every generous mind, for the natural influence of failing health. But, after all, I never knew a human being, with a more placable spirit, or a tenderer heart. This I say advisedly ; and, as I think, with a thorough knowledge of the man. — J. L.

far better founded, than that, with which they now show to the enquiring stranger, the birth-place of unhappy Sterne !' Surely, not to love such a man, was altogether impossible.

The young student's views for the future, were, at first, not very definite : certainly, they were any thing but hopeful.

His poor parents had made a great struggle, to procure him the advantages which he already enjoyed : and to think of the University, seemed little less than preposterous. But Mr. Carey was a vigilant, and ardent friend. He smoothed all difficulties ; surmounted every scruple ; and, from his own scanty income, advanced a sufficient yearly allowance to cover all ordinary college expenses. Nor was this assistance discontinued, but in consequence of Phelan's own earnest request ; when, on his election to a scholarship, it ceased to be strictly necessary. And, to bring his school-boy days to a close, he was, after having remained three years under Mr. Carey, admitted a sizer of Trinity College, Dublin, in June, 1806, and in the eighteenth year of his age.

Before his removal, however, to this wider sphere of action, an important change had taken place, in his theological opinions. The commencement of this change, I have the advantage of stating in the words of Dr. Phelan himself, as re-

lated by him to an early friend.\* ‘ I was walking home with \*\*\*\*\*, (member of a lay fraternity of Roman Catholics,) to translate for him some portion of the Breviary, when Mr. Carey rode by on his mule, at his usual quiet pace : . . ‘ What a pity,’ said \*\*\*\*\*, ‘ that *that* good man cannot be saved !’ . . I started : the doctrine of exclusive salvation never appeared so prodigious ; and I warmly denied its truth, and authority. \*\*\*\*\* was stubborn in its defence ; and we each cited testimonies, in behalf of our respective opinions. I withdrew to bed ; occupied by thoughts which this incident awakened ; went over, again, all the arguments, *pro* and *con.*, which my memory could supply ; weighed all the evidence, which, in my judgment, might throw light on the subject ; questioned, whether any evidence could induce me to acquiesce, in a dogma so revolting ; and fell asleep, in no good disposition to the creed, which could pronounce Mr. Carey’s reprobation. In the morning when I awoke, it appeared, that I had insensibly reasoned myself into the belief of the right of private judgment ; and, thus, I virtually reasoned myself out of the Church of Rome.’

The impression thus happily made, was not suffered long to remain dormant, or inactive. Even in his boyish days, he had a most sagacious, pene-

\* The Reverend Mortimer O’Sullivan.



trating mind. With him, religion was never a matter of compromise, or convention. He regarded it, as the main concern of life ; on which was suspended his everlasting happiness or misery. It became, therefore, the object of his very serious thoughts ; and his anxious researches produced a thorough conviction, that the Church of England is the soundest portion of the church of Christ. Accordingly, on entering college, he gave in his name, as a Protestant.\* While any lingering doubts, (those fond misgivings of the finest and the firmest minds,) which might, perhaps, at first, have somewhat obscured his intellectual vision, were entirely dissipated, by a judicious course of reading ; in which he was accompanied, and assisted, by his able and affectionate tutor, at that time preparing for holy orders.† Nor should it be omitted,

\* In the University of Dublin, Roman-Catholics are admissible.

A fact, which I have learned since writing the above paragraph, should, by no means, be omitted. Before Dr. Phelan's entrance into Trinity College, it had been the wish of his father, (a very natural one surely,) that he should become a student at Maynooth, with a view to the priesthood of the Church of Rome. He was induced, accordingly, to attend an examination, held at Waterford, for one or more vacancies in that seminary. Though much younger than the other candidates, his literary superiority was evident ; and a vacancy was, in consequence, placed at his option. He, however, declined it. The fact is, his former opinions, had been already shaken ; and he soon became irrevocably attached to the Church of England. — J. L.

† Dr. Wall.



for, in him, it was quite characteristic, that the clear convictions of his judgment were unaccompanied by the least acerbity of feeling. Indeed, he never ceased to bear the tenderest affection towards his Roman-Catholic brethren ; he, continually, and most earnestly, looked to their spiritual improvement ; and, a very short time before his death, he thus writes to a confidential friend : . .  
' My heart yearns to go to the south : I would revive my Irish ; and acquire enough of it, for expounding the Irish Bible.'

He was now (1806), fairly launched in academic life ; and his progress may be not unfitly described, as an unbroken career of successful application. His competitors were the most distinguished men, who, for many years, had appeared in the University. But, among the very foremost, he honourably maintained his ground ; and, it is little to say, that he obtained a scholarship, and the highest honours, both classical and scientific, which could be conferred ; for, in truth, he rated such things at their proper value ; trifling in themselves, and chiefly to be prized, as indicating studious habits, and a healthful, manly mind. One great object, indeed, he had, of what may be termed a holy ambition ; it was, that, under Providence, he might become the support and stay of his aged parents.

It should be mentioned, that, during his under-

graduate course, he obtained several prizes, for compositions, in English verse, and Latin prose. Such, however, was his fastidiousness, or his modesty, that, in no single instance, did he keep a copy: not a line of those early productions has been found amongst his papers; and there is every likelihood, that they have altogether perished. But the recollection of them is still vivid, among his contemporaries. And it is worthy of being recorded, that an Englishman, Dr. Hall\*, then Provost of Trinity College Dublin, and afterwards (for one short week!) Bishop of Dromore, . . . one of the most accomplished scholars of his day, was often heard to express his admiration, at the skill and power evinced, in the composition of Latin prose, by this extraordinary young man. One Essay, in particular, he used to say, was so purely classical, that whole passages might have been taken from it, and, without risk of detection, inserted in the works of Cicero.† In English verse, too, his union of metaphysical and poetical expression, was truly remarkable. And it has been observed, by one well acquainted with the early movements of his mind, that, if he had chosen to concentrate his powers, in one great poem, on Mental Philosophy,

\* George Hall, D.D.: educated at the celebrated grammar-school of Newcastle-upon-Tyne.

† From the information of a contemporary.

he would, perhaps, have been unrivalled, in the art of clothing the abstractions of metaphysical science, in language alike elegant, perspicuous, and familiar.\* Happily, however, his mind took another direction.

In the spring of 1810, he commenced A.B. On that occasion, the Provost and Senior Fellows adjudged to him the gold medal, then given, not, as at present, to the best answerer at an examination, held expressly for the purpose; but, to that graduating student, who, throughout the entire previous course of four years, had evinced the greatest industry, diligence, and ability.† About the same time, he obtained the mathematical premium, on Bishop Law's‡ foundation, the examiners being Dr. Magee, Professor of Mathematics (late Archbishop of Dublin); Dr. Brinkley, Professor of Astronomy (now Bishop of Cloyne); and Dr. Davenport, Professor of Natural Philosophy.

\* He was fond, though not indiscriminately so, of the *Anti-Lucretius* of Cardinal Polignac. See pp. 298. 319., of this volume. — J. L.

† The writer is well aware, that there are difficulties in the case. Still, however, he begs leave to express his doubts, whether some modification of the old plan, might not be advantageously resorted to. It seems desirable, to have some test, not only of comparative, but of positive merit: not merely of a superiority, perhaps, accidental, in one great trial; but, of an habitual course of continuous, and well-directed exertion. — J. L.

‡ John Law, D.D., formerly Bishop of Elphin.

The important period had now arrived, when he was to make his choice of life : and, not without some interval of suspense and deliberation, he determined to read for a fellowship : an undertaking, under any circumstances, arduous in the extreme ; but, in his case, attended with peculiar difficulties. Like other candidates, he had the probability before him (should life be spared) of devoting six or seven of the prime years of life, to intense, and perhaps unavailing, application. The drawbacks, too, of a very delicate constitution, were to be disregarded, or overcome ; while the daily drudgery of private tuition was to be endured, not merely for his own support, but, what was a far dearer object, for the maintenance and comfort of his aged parents. All this he encountered, with pious, and persevering equanimity : and, perhaps, I may scarcely be credited, when I state the fact, that, between reading, and lecturing, he was commonly occupied, from four o'clock in the morning, till ten or eleven at night ; while, almost his single relaxation, was sought in variety of labour. But, at all times, he evinced so collected a mind, such disengagedness, animation, and serenity, that it was visible only to the scrutinizing eye of friendship, how irreparably he was undermining his constitution. As matter of duty, his anxious friends, sometimes, broke in upon his

abstruse speculations; but, when, for a short space, thus compelled to be comparatively idle, he would always take the interruption in good part: and, not less to the instruction, than delight of his associates, would enter, with freshness and spirit, upon some literary topic. Nor was he mindful, only, or chiefly, of his own mental wants and feelings. Often, with a shade before his weak eyes, his temples bathed with vinegar, and his mind engaged on some difficult problem, has he cheerfully paused from his labours, and, with alacrity, applied himself to remove the scientific difficulties, not of his pupils, (that was a distinct duty, to be performed at stated intervals,) but of some junior friend, or acquaintance. This was a volunteer service; the habit of aiding others, from pure benevolence of disposition, grew into his very nature: thus it was at school, from an early period; nor, in after life, was there, in this respect, any perceptible difference.

Throughout the fellowship course, his kind tutor, Mr. Wall, regarded him, not merely as a friend, but as a brother. Books, experience, literary counsel, were ever ready at a call; his purse, too, was always generously open; and he often intreated that it might be allowed to supersede the necessity, which the young candidate felt imposed upon him, of taking private pupils. This aid, offered, as it

was, with most scrupulous delicacy, was sometimes accepted, with manly freedom; one restriction, however, he almost invariably imposed upon himself; he would never consent, (unless when himself wholly unprovided,) to employ the resources, even of his dearest friends, in aiding his beloved and respected parents. It was his delight, the purest, surely, which a pious son can enjoy, to afford assistance, by his own independent exertions, to those, who, with much difficulty, and self-denial, had procured for him the benefits and blessings, of a good early education.

Thus he persevered, for nearly three years, in a course of well-sustained, though ruinous exertion; under which many a more vigorous constitution must have inevitably sunk: but he was supported, by the indomitable principle of filial piety. Towards the close, however, of the year 1812, his medical advisers were constrained to make it a point, that he should intermit some portion of his daily labours; and should sleep out of the air of Dublin. Accordingly, he took a small lodging, at a moderate distance from his college chambers. Here it occurred to him, that, if he could obtain a prize of 50*l.* then offered by the Royal Irish Academy, for the best Essay on a given literary subject, he might, for a time, relieve himself from the irksome task of private tuition. But, as suc-



cess was uncertain, he was still obliged to retain some pupils: and thus, till the period of decision, his labours were not diminished, but increased. In the brief interval, then, the hasty moments, which he could snatch from his daily toil, he penned his Essay, on the backs of letters, and on such scraps of paper as might be at hand; he walked every evening, (the only exercise he allowed himself,) to his College-chambers, that he might give those papers to his brother for transcription; and relied on his memory alone, for taking up the train of thought, each day, where it had been laid down, the day before. He did not revise, or even read, the transcript; and, as this was his first effort in English prose, he felt so much difficulty, in arranging his thoughts in our language, that he actually resorted to the expedient, of first mentally composing in Latin: so that, the entire Essay, may, in a great measure, be accounted a translation. It is given in this volume (pp. 260—320.); therefore, it is needless for me, to pass a judgment on its merits. It will, I think, be considered an extraordinary composition, to have been produced under such circumstances, by a young man of less than four and twenty; and its terseness, facility, and elegance of diction, may, perhaps, best be accounted for, by the fact, that it was originally

conceived in Cicero's own language, by a finished classical scholar. To this Essay, was adjudged the academy's first prize, in the beginning of 1813. It may here be mentioned, that, in the earlier part of 1814, he prepared another successful paper for the Academy, 'On the force of Habit, considered in conjunction with the Love of Novelty.' This has not been published in the Transactions; having, by some unfortunate mischance, been lost at the Academy-House. I am told, however, that, both by Dr. Phelan himself, and by others, it was considered superior to the Essay of the preceding year. It showed an uncommon command of language, and fine metaphysical powers.

But we must return to his great and overwhelming pursuit. In the year 1813, then, he offered himself a candidate, for one of the fellowships at that time vacant: his preparation was intense, and his answering, both in quality, and style, was such, that it excited a very general interest in his behalf. In the interval between the examination, and the announcement of successful candidates, scarcely a doubt was entertained, that he would have been the second fellow. His friends had, by anticipation, hailed the consummation of his labours; and, even his own modest and retiring nature, was unable wholly to withstand



the popular impression. But the event was otherwise.\*

In the almost certain prospect of success, he had set apart nearly the whole of that little which he possessed, for the comfort and accommodation of his parents ; nor, in the moment of defeat, did he alter his pious purpose. His words to his brother, when he recovered from the first shock, are never to be forgotten : . . ‘ Well, James, send the money, nevertheless, to its proper destination : and, my dear fellow, have a good heart, and a hope fixed on high ; we shall overcome even this blow.’

A few days after this disappointment, he met Dr. Graves†, one of his examiners ; who, in his

\* There were then three vacancies ; the filling up of the first, was beyond all question ; Mr. Purdon had eight voices ; those of the whole examining body. Respecting the other two vacancies, there was more difficulty. The examiners were divided ; and Mr. Phelan was thrown out, by the casting vote of the Provost. The statute requires, that vacant fellowships shall be filled up, not ‘ *seriatim*,’ but ‘ *simul et semel*’ ; and no provision is made, for ascertaining the value of each particular vote. The special hardship, which, in this instance, inevitably grew out of this untoward arrangement, was, that, had there been but two, instead of three vacancies, Mr. Phelan must have succeeded. These facts I have from unquestionable information. It is but proper to add, that there was not the slightest shadow of unfairness, in the whole transaction. All arose, from the unhappy wording of the statute ; which loudly calls for alteration.—J. L.

† The late very Rev. Richard Graves, D.D., Dean of Ardagh : honourably known, by his various theological publi-

kind, sympathizing manner, said, . . ‘ Phelan, I am sorry for you : but I did my best ; you had my vote.’ He bowed, smiled, and instantly answered,

‘ *Victrix causa Diis placuit, sed victa Catoni*’ :

The good, and benevolent man, was visibly affected.

At this trying juncture, as, indeed, throughout the whole course of his varied life, Divine Providence raised up to him many, and discriminating friends : among these, was the Right Honourable William Conyngham Plunket, the present Lord Chancellor of Ireland. The writer well remembers the ardour, with which Mr. Phelan was accustomed to dilate, on the high intellectual attainments of that eminent individual. In the family of that gentleman, he had been repeatedly domesticated ; having been private tutor to several of his sons : and, from his familiar conversation, he reaped advantages, which no person was better able to enjoy, and appreciate, than Mr. Phelan himself. At this season of disappointment, Lord Plunket came forward, as

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cations. May the writer be permitted to add, his humble, but sincere tribute, to the learning, piety, and goodness, of this exemplary man ? Towards his latter days, we had, on a particular question, some trifling difference of judgment. But I never can forget the impression, made on my youthful mind, by the mild, but powerful influence of his unaffected zeal. — J. L.

an attached friend ; he recommended to him the study of the law ; and, till practice should come in, nobly pressed on him an allowance of 300*l.* a year. For this princely offer, he was deeply grateful ; indeed, he never forgot it, to his dying day : but, after mature deliberation, he most thankfully declined it. In fact, he thought the kindness too great to be accepted : but, what, with him, was far more decisive, though, like most young Irishmen of talents, he had originally a predilection for the bar, . . his more serious studies had given him another relish ; and he thought he might be happier, as well as more useful, in the service of the church.

Amidst his arduous labours, he derived never-failing supplies of animation, from the fresh and salient mind of Dr. Magee, afterwards Archbishop of Dublin. This distinguished scholar, was in the constant habit of visiting his chambers, inquiring after his progress, and entering into all the misgivings of his sensitive mind. With the office of speaking, as I feel, of almost my earliest friend ; of him, who guided my first youthful efforts, and encouraged the pursuits of my maturer years, I should fear to trust myself. Therefore, it is with peculiar satisfaction, that I resort to the anonymous, but faithful testimony, of a friend ; which I know had special, though not exclusive reference, to his affectionate kindness for Mr. Phelan :

‘The most engaging instances of his (Archbishop Magee’s) philanthropy, were undoubtedly those, in which he made it his business, and found it his pleasure, to direct and animate by his advice, the young men, in whom he perceived any remarkable degree of ability : while he literally watched over them, with the affection of a father, he entered into their views, and concerned himself in their interests, with the warmth and familiarity of a friend. Were they desponding ? they were cheered : were they negligent ? they were counselled : were they straitened by pecuniary difficulties ? relief was liberally afforded : did they experience an embarrassment, in mastering the severer sciences ? amidst all the cares, and occupations of his laborious station, assistance never was withheld. Many are the hours of despondency which hang upon the spirits of that young man, who, unsupported by wealth, or patronage, is labouring, by the path of academic distinction, to attain a reputable independence. Frequent are the misgivings, which damp his ardour, in a pursuit, where health, is, not seldom, irrecoverably lost, before the object is accomplished : and no one feels with more poignant bitterness, that ‘sickness of the heart,’ which arises from ‘hope deferred.’ How often has Dr. Magee passed, from the privacy of his own domestic circle, to the lonely rooms of the pale and wasted votary

of science ; and banished, by his benignant presence, and his cheerful, animating conversation, the morbid melancholy which was preying on him, and which, otherwise, might have brought him to an untimely grave ! How often have the studies, which were abandoned in disgust, or despair, been resumed, at his instance, with alacrity and diligence ; and ultimately rewarded, with a success, which must have been unattainable, but for his generous and inspiriting encouragement !’

But a deeply-seated, and, as the event finally proved, an immedicable wound, had been inflicted on Mr. Phelan’s constitution. The shock given to his bodily frame, rendered him, for several months, incapable of any continuous exertion ; and, at this season of depression, the sole fruit of his labours was, the second of his prize Essays, for the Royal Irish Academy.

Towards the commencement of the year 1814, we find him, again, devoted to severe fellowship reading. In the month of June, he sat ; and was defeated, by Thomas Romney Robinson, the most distinguished of his contemporaries : now D.D., and Astronomical Professor, on the foundation of his namesake, but not his relative, Primate Robinson \*, at the Observatory of Armagh.

\* Lord Rokeby, Archbishop of Armagh : eminent for princely munificence.

And, here, it may not be improper, to say a few words, on the character of Dr. Phelan's mind.

His powers of acquiring knowledge, were of a peculiar, and very superior quality. He had the happy faculty of instantly mastering a writer's meaning: he could instinctively seize on every thing, in every possible direction, which was of the least real moment; he glanced, with the rapidity of lightning, through the most abstruse, and difficult volumes; and his mind seemed invested with a sort of magical influence, which compelled them to render up their contents; and turned, so to speak, the minds of authors inside out. He discerned matter, even in the more abstract sciences, which could happily illustrate whatever might be the immediate object of research. Facts, and narratives, were to him, that, which the elementary forms of letters are, to ordinary readers; conveying, not so much the impression of themselves, as that of the thought, or principle, towards imparting which, they were instrumental. History, travels, philosophy, and poetry, no less than matters of strict science, he read with a sagacious, comprehensive spirit; separating, always, eternal principles, from the accidents in which they were rendered visible. And that, which, even to advanced students, is commonly the result of distinct, and often of severe reflection, was, in his



mind, the thing primarily noticed. The matter professedly studied, was, to him, merely introductory and subordinate.

He used to complain, that his mind suffered from mathematical pursuits ; that, when engaged in such investigations, his finer and more delicate powers were depressed ; and, that he became disqualified for the pursuit, of higher and nobler inquiries. But this, it is humbly conceived, was a mistake ; at least, he appeared to his friends, always ready to form a judgment, not only sound and good, but exquisitely refined, on almost every subject within the compass of letters : and, indeed, his very fondness for the higher branches of mathematics, is, in itself, a sufficient refutation of this morbid apprehension. He was eager for principles, impatient of details : but, at the same time, he subjected every principle, to the severest possible test ; and would never admit any position, within the scope of ratiocination, till it was most incontrovertibly proved.

All inquiries about light, and heat, had, for him, a peculiar interest : these qualities seemed, on account of their extreme tenuity, ever ready to evanesce, till they became almost immaterial. This predisposition of his mind, may be illustrated, by a little circumstance, within my own recollection. During one of the visits with which he indulged me,



when Rector of Abington, he manifested the most intense gratification, (even now, I have a lively image of it present with me,) at Sir Walter Scott's beautiful fiction of the 'White Lady : ' . . ' Of all apparitions,' he said, ' this comes nearest to my conception of a pure spirit.'

But the pursuits, in which he took unmingled pleasure, were those of mental and moral philosophy. To these, when fatigued and exhausted by severer study, he turned with ever-new delight. On such occasions, he used, with our Platonic Bard, to exclaim,

‘ How charming is divine Philosophy !  
Not harsh and crabbed, as dull fools suppose ;  
But musical, as is Apollo's lute,  
And a perpetual feast of nectar'd sweets,  
Where no crude surfeit reigns.’

In the weak state of his eyes, it was his habit to read, with the eyes of a friend. In this manner, he prepared the entire logical, and ethical course, prescribed for fellowships in Dublin. His friend particularly mentions the enthusiasm, with which he used to expatiate on some parts of Cicero's Second Book, 'De Legibus : ' of Bishops Berkeley, and Butler, too, he used to speak highly ; and with complacency, of Dr. Reid. He was not so well satisfied, with Mr. Locke. To him, the design of this

eminent man, seemed to embrace too little, or too much : too little, if the understanding alone, . . as distinguished from the moral mind, imagination, passions, and affections, . . was the object of his inquiry : too much, if the positions for which he contended, be thought, in themselves, sufficient to account for all the moral and intellectual phenomena of our nature.

While reading for fellowships, his progress was unquestionably retarded, by a habit in which he freely indulged ; which, however, contributed much to increase, not merely the extent, but the accuracy, of his knowledge ; and to repress, at once, and discipline, that fondness for mental anticipation, which is so apt to beset youthful, and ardent minds. The habit was, . . ‘ never to rest satisfied, with the bare demonstration of a truth.’ He wished, so far as practicable, to know, whence it came, and whither it was going. He would, therefore, to the utmost of his power, investigate any important fact, in all its bearings ; and frequently has he employed half a day, (a serious expense of time, as all fellowship-men are perfectly aware,) in tracing the various deductions, which might legitimately be drawn from it. His competitors, on the other hand, were often more prudently, if not so intellectually, employed. They were collecting ma-

terials, less recondite, indeed, but more immediately producible ; and their object was, not so much to lay the foundation for future researches, as to show themselves competently versed, in that, which was already known. Mr. Phelan could never endure the thought, of becoming the mere carrier of intellectual burthens. His wish was, so far as might lawfully be, to lift the veil from nature ; and get an insight into the wondrous principles, both natural and moral, on which all-perfect Wisdom regulates the world. Thus, the very superiority of his mental powers and attainments, often stood in his way. He read more like a master, than a scholar ; more as one, whose own mind was to be satisfied, than as a person, whose business it was, to satisfy the minds of others. He looked around him, with the ken of a philosopher : and he less assiduously cultivated presence of mind, and fertility of resources, than those subtler processes of mind, which have ever formed the chosen exercise of genius. Had the question been, who, of his contemporaries it was, that possessed the seeds of powers, most akin to those of the great Discoverers of Science, or Restorers of Letters, he might, perhaps, have ranked not greatly beneath the first men, of our best days. As it was, . . with a nearly exhausted constitution, broken spirits, and a de-

bilitated frame, it is little to be wondered at, that he was unequal to the arduous conflict : which, however, he still gallantly sustained.

But, that we may pass to a more grateful topic, it can be readily understood, that, with a mind thus stored, and thus disciplined, he must have been a delightful companion. That, which I have heard from his early associates, was, in the course of no slight, superficial intercourse, abundantly realized to myself. I have rarely met with an individual, who, in conversation, so fairly produced his mind ; or, let me add, whose mind, was more worthy of production. At the instant, he could command all the powers of thought, and aids of learning, to bear on any subject, which they might properly illustrate ; and, what was more remarkable, they never failed to come at his bidding. Those, with whom he was in the habit of familiar intercourse, will not readily forget the force and animation of his manner, when he wished to express himself pointedly, upon any topic, which had seriously occupied his mind. His sentences followed each other uninterruptedly, and without effort ; brief, terse, and emphatic : and if, on the spur of occasion, taken down and made use of, they would have been found to possess all the elements, of exact and finished composition. While, there would occasionally burst from him, the liveliest

sallies of wit, and not unfrequently, a vein of playful humour, which rendered his conversation, in its happier hours, (and they were always its quiet ones,) one of the richest intellectual enjoyments. Such intercourse could not fail to delight; for it was ever natural, ever instructive: and it is still among my chosen recreations, to recal the days, and nights, which I have passed in the society of William Phelan.

His trial for fellowships was now over: to all appearance, it was interminably closed. But he was not destitute of consolation. He was conscious, that he had done his best; he could not charge himself with any wilful failure of duty, or any want of persevering application; and he viewed disappointment itself, as a mode of providential discipline, which, ‘He who careth for us’, ever graciously adapts to our peculiar exigences.

In July, 1814, he proceeded A. M.: and, shortly after, on the kind and seasonable invitation of his friend, and former associate on the fellowship bench, the Rev. J. H. Stubbs, Master of the endowed school of Dundalk, he became, for a short time, the guest of that gentleman. An influential visit, as will afterwards appear: which, eventually, occasioned a great change, in the prospects and circumstances of his after life. In the month of October, on the recommendation of

Dr. Magee, then Dean of Cork, he was appointed second Master of the endowed school of Derry.\* Here, he entered into holy orders ; being ordained deacon, Dec. 4. 1814, and priest, Jan. 4. 1815, by the Lord Bishop of Derry ; and, soon after his first ordination, began to officiate, in the chapel of ease of that city.† There, he continued for upwards of two years ; applying himself diligently, to the duties of his humble calling ; and devoting every leisure hour to those sacred studies, which, even then, constituted his resource, and delight.

\* I cannot help mentioning, that at this school, I was educated, under the Reverend Thomas Marshall, A. M. This kind and generous man, was the delight of his pupils : and I never shall forget the tragic impression made on us all, when, about the autumn of 1790, it pleased God to remove him. How much I am indebted to his fostering care, I shall never, in this world, be fully able to appreciate. One of my earliest efforts, was a boyish, but sincere, tribute to his memory ; it was an imitation of the ‘ *Quis desiderio, &c.*’ of Horace.

But, to Derry school, and to Horace, I have other, and far higher obligations. They were the means of introducing me to the notice of Alexander Knox, Esquire ; who was fond of hearing me repeat my lessons, from that most felicitous of authors ; he, afterwards, became my guide, philosopher, and friend. From him, in the course of a long intimacy, I derived principles, which, I trust, will never die. Obiit, eheu ! Jun. 18. 1831.—J. L.

† His appointment, at the salary of £50. a year, is dated Dec. 27. 1814. : of which salary, he was never paid a single shilling ; though he served the chaplaincy, without intermission, till March, 1817.



He thus disturbed the repose of a few valuable old volumes, in the diocesan library ; though, of the time occupied in this manner, there is, probably, no written record. But his was a mind, which was never idle ; and, to such information as he already possessed, there is a moral certainty, that, at this period, he added extensively. In the month of August, 1816, it should be mentioned, he was, with some apparent hopes of success, a candidate for the endowed school, or college, of Kilkenny.

About this period, the writer had the happiness to form an acquaintance with Mr. Phelan, which, at no distant day, ripened into friendship. A valued contemporary of his \*, had, some time previously, told me several interesting anecdotes of his early life : and put into my hands, at the Rectory of Abington, his prize Essay, ‘ On Scientific and Literary Pursuits.’ I was, therefore, duly prepared to appreciate a singularly modest, unpretending letter, which he addressed to me from Derry ; bearing date the 14th of December, 1816. It now lies open before me : and it could not fail to rekindle, were they dormant, which, happily, they never have been, the liveliest feelings of interest, in himself, his mind, and his pursuits. Like every other production of his pen, which it

\* The Rev. Richard Ryan.



has been my fortune to see, (for in his instance, to see, and to read, were identical,) it is clothed in language, alike natural, manly, and independent. The object of it, was, to ascertain how far his judgment and mine might coincide, respecting the eligibility of his publishing a short treatise, which he was then preparing, on the subject of the Bible Society. As to the general bearings of that question, my feelings are, elsewhere, briefly stated.\* In conformity with opinions, which I had early formed, and from which I have never swerved, I ventured to suggest, that his mental powers would be employed far more advantageously, on some great original work, than upon what, must, after all, rank as a mere temporary pamphlet. My reasons, however, failed, to have quite so much weight with Mr. Phelan, at the time, as they may, perhaps, have subsequently had. He, accordingly, published, not immediately, (for a very serious occupation intervened) but in the autumn of the next year, his able tract ; *παντα μοι εξεστιν, αλλ' ου παντα συμφερεσι*. It was entitled 'The Bible, not the Bible Society.' This work, greatly praised, and not good-naturedly vituperated, was, for a long while, the alternate mark of reprobation and

\* Practical Theology, vol. ii. p. 70.

panegyric : and, in its immediate, and, yet more, in its remote consequences, it gave a colouring, nearly to the whole of Mr. Phelan's apparent future life : but, happily, he had another, and a better life, which was 'hid with Christ in God.'

To the world, he was chiefly known as a polemical writer ; indeed, it is probable that many of his contemporaries have heard of him in that capacity alone. And, it must be confessed, that, hitherto, from unhappy circumstances, there has been, in Ireland, but little opportunity, and, if possible, less encouragement, for theological learning. While, under a proper system, and with wise selection, eminent examples of it might have been multiplied, to the unspeakable advantage both of church and country. But, in fact, though some ephemeral stimulus to exertion, may have occasionally been applied, it is a melancholy truth, that the flip-pant pamphlet, and slight brochure, (of merit very different, indeed, from the slightest efforts of Mr. Phelan,) have been generally thought, a far more marketable commodity, than any solid work of genius, piety, or learning.

But his was, in truth, a far loftier spirit : he predominantly loved the high and lonely walk. His most current, popular productions, occupied but a small portion of his time, and less of his thoughts. And they, who have enjoyed his confi-

dence the longest, and most unreservedly, are best aware, on themes how different from the vulgar cant of the day, it was his delight to expatiate. For my own part, I can safely say, that, in all our years of friendly intercourse, he never uttered a syllable, whether grave or gay, which did not, as was said of Archbishop Leighton, more or less directly tend to edification. Indeed, if I had not intimately known, that he was something far other, and better, than an expert controversialist, I will candidly own, that the present memoir should not have been written. This fore-dated disclosure will, I trust, exempt me from all, but the bare mention of his chief polemical tracts, in the order of publication. They were written merely *ex παρρηγού*, called forth by the seeming exigencies of the times : but he was living centrally, for eternity,

‘ And all his serious thoughts had rest in Heaven.’

We may, now, revert to Mr. Phelan’s more private concerns. He had long been in a very delicate state of health ; and his physicians thought it might be expedient, that he should try the air of Mallow, in the county of Cork. Symptoms, however, seemingly improved : and as, on several accounts, such an excursion must have been inconvenient, it was not, under this favourable change, at that time undertaken.

Meanwhile, he was, unexpectedly, summoned to a wider sphere. Towards the close of March, 1817, his vigilant friend, Dr. Wall, strongly urged that he should, forthwith, come to Dublin, and again sit for a fellowship ; of which, there were, at that time, two to be filled up. All his friends, none more earnestly than Dr. Magee, were, also, instant in their intreaties. Therefore, after nearly three years' alienation from academical pursuits, and about six weeks before the day of trial, he came to the scene of action. His first visit was to the college chambers of a friend : ' Well,' said he, ' here I am ; and what do you want with me ?' . . ' We want you,' was the reply, ' to get a fellowship.' He looked perplexed, and anxious. He was almost certain, that, within the space of six short weeks, it was hopeless that he should regain so much lost ground. Besides, a great additional weight of science had been thrown into the course : especially the whole system of French Analysis ; to which he was nearly a total stranger. To work, however, he went ; and, with that vigour and intensity, which seemed inseparable from his being. And what was the consequence ? Difficulties, like a ' frost-work,' suddenly ' melted away'\* before him ; and he was unanimously elected a Fellow of Trinity College, Dublin.

\* Rogers : ' Pleasures of Memory.'

During the short, but arduous course of immediate preparation, he withdrew, to the adjacent village of Dundrum ; and there, he was affectionately watched, and cheered, by his early and unchanging friend, the Rev. Richard Ryan.

His own account of the transaction, is remarkable for its simplicity, and candour ; it is derived from two of his letters, written at the very time. Short extracts from them, will, probably, interest the reader. ‘ April 12. 1817. I am going in again, for fellowships : not from any hope, nor, indeed, from any wish, to succeed ; but merely because I want money,’ [clearly to relieve his parents ; for his personal expenses were small, and his prudence was great :] and I think it just possible, that I may get the first premium. Three weeks ago, I formed this resolution ; and I have now six weeks to read.’ Three days after the termination of the conflict, he again writes : ‘ June 5. By a caprice of fortune, entirely unexpected, I am now a fellow. The answering, you may suppose, was but indifferent ; when, after three years’ cessation, I was considered the best answerer.’ Such was his own modest estimate ; ever apt to undervalue his mental attainments : but it was happily corrected, by the public voice ; his very friends, too, the jealous guardians of his good

repute, were abundantly satisfied ; not by his success merely, but especially at the manner of it.

He was, by the blessing of God, on his own exertions, now placed in a station of permanent independence : certain of an income, moderate, indeed, but competent ; and having the fair prospect of attaining, at no remote period, what to him would be affluence. But his mind was raised above all selfish considerations ; now, as formerly, his parents were foremost in his thoughts ; and the path which he marked out for himself, was one of unassuming privacy. During the long vacation, he sought that repose, which his wearied mind required ; he had done much, in a little time : and it was not till October, 1817, that he gave to the press, that pamphlet, which he had prepared at Derry. Thenceforward, his time was chiefly divided between private study, and his college duties.

In November, 1818, he was elected Donnellan Lecturer ; and preached the first sermon of his course, on Trinity Sunday, 1819. The manner, and general purpose of these lectures, will be sufficiently explained, by the following extract, from the Registry of Trin. Coll. Dublin : . .

‘ February 22. 1794.

‘ Whereas, a legacy of 1243*l.* has been bequeathed to the College of Dublin, by Mrs. Anne Don-

nellan, for the encouragement of religion, learning, and good manners, the particular mode of application being entrusted to the Provost, and Senior Fellows :

‘ Resolved,

‘ 1. That a Divinity Lecture, to which shall be annexed a salary, arising from the interest of 1200*l.*, shall be established for ever, to be called Donnellan’s Lecture.

‘ 2. That the Lecturer shall be forthwith elected, from among the Fellows of said College : and hereafter, annually, on the 20th November.

‘ 3. That the subject, or subjects, of the Lecture, shall be determined at the time of election, by the Board ; to be treated in six sermons ; which shall be delivered in the College Chapel, immediately after morning service, on certain Sundays, to be appointed on the 20th of November, next after the election of the Lecturer, and within a year from the said appointment.

‘ 4. That one moiety of the interest of the said 1200*l.* shall be paid to the Lecturer, as soon as he shall have delivered the whole number of lectures ; and the other moiety, as soon as he shall have published four of the said lectures : one copy, to be deposited in the Library of the College ; one, in the Library of Armagh ; one, in the Library of St. Sepulchre ; one, to be given to the Chancellor ‘



of the University ; and one to the Provost of the College.’

This foundation, unquestionably well-intended, has failed, nevertheless, to render all the service, which originally was designed. Since its establishment, upwards of eight and thirty years have elapsed : how many volumes have, in consequence, been published ? how many sermons have been preached ? The fact is, an original error seems to have taken place, in limiting the field of the Donnellan Lectures, to the narrow circle of existing Fellows ; seven seniors ; and fifteen (afterwards increased to eighteen) juniors ; three, at least, of whom, are statutably laymen. These able men are all fully and laboriously occupied, in the government, or education, of fifteen hundred undergraduates ; and the inevitable consequence has been, that few candidates have proffered themselves, for the office of Donnellan Lecturer.\* The remedy,

\* On a former occasion, the writer used language nearly similar ; which he here takes the liberty of citing : ‘ In Ireland, we have, unfortunately, not abounded in magnificent patrons of learning. The University of Dublin was founded at a period, when the zeal for *thus* [by foundations, benefactions, &c.] promoting good letters, had gone by. Accordingly we have but one College, one Provost, and twenty-five Fellows, for the education of about fifteen hundred under-graduates. These twenty-six very learned men, who attained their present honourable rank, after years of intense study, and through the most arduous literary com-

in this case, seems natural and easy. Why not throw the field of selection open, (as in the Bampton Lecture Sermons, at Oxford, and the Hulsean Lectures, and office of Christian Advocate, at Cambridge,) to all persons who have taken the degree of Master of Arts. The present excellent Christian Advocate of the latter University, never was a Fellow. This suggestion is thrown out, in ardent, but, it is hoped, not ill-regulated zeal, at once for the credit of the College, and for the advancement of good letters in Ireland. The University, and the Country at large, ought, in various respects, to be drawn more closely together: and, from a proper intercourse, and community of feeling, great benefits might, at no distant day, eventually arise to both of them. But we must pursue our more immediate subject.

Dr. Phelan, if his health, which was always delicate, be excepted, was well-circumstanced, for close application to this additional duty. So young among the Fellows, he had few pupils; for whom, indeed, neither directly, nor indirectly, neither by

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petition in the world, have upon their shoulders, the instruction and government of fifteen hundred young men: and, thus occupied, they certainly have little redundant time, for the pleasures, and the pains of Authorship.' — Bishop of Limerick's Speech in the House of Lords, June 10. 1824.

himself, nor by his friends, did he ever think it right to seek. He had full leisure, therefore, for his favourite pursuits. His mind always had a predilection for inquiries, addressed, at once, to the intellectual, and moral man : and he loved to regard the deeper, and more mysterious truths of Christianity, as, not merely, on proof given of their divine authority, to be implicitly received, and venerated ; but, much more, as indispensable parts of a divine system, provided by the comprehensive and all-gracious wisdom of God, for the renewal, enlargement, and purification of our spiritual being. He sought, therefore, to exhibit, the Christian scheme, in such a manner, as might best show its correspondence, in all its parts, to the wants and anticipations of human nature. His lectures, accordingly, may, in some sort, be regarded, as an effort to describe the physiology of Revealed Religion. Others have carefully examined facts, and doctrines ; and discussed their evidence, according to the dictates of forensic pleading : he, on the contrary, was more solicitous to discover, what may be termed, the functions of those facts and doctrines. It is one thing, for example, to establish the doctrine of the Trinity, by alleging the various passages of Holy Writ, in which it is more or less distinctly revealed. It is another, and, perhaps, a yet more important office, to show, that this mys-

terious, yet infinitely practical doctrine, is precisely such a revelation of the Divine Nature, as could, alone, enable man to accomplish the great purposes, for which he was called into existence. By the one line of argument, the timid believer may be persuaded, that his Christianity is true ; by the other, the candid sceptic may be convinced, that it is reasonable and just. The judgment is thus satisfied, through the previous conviction of the moral sense ; and, from the congruity between ends and means, between the weakness of man, and the sufficiency of God, the facts and doctrines, which may, once, have appeared, not merely above reason, but contrary to it, will, at once, be found, harmonious in their operation, and, so to speak, in their nature necessary.

Such was the lofty argument, which habitually occupied Dr. Phelan's mind ; and which he sought to embody, in the Donnellan Lectures. How far he may have succeeded, in the application of these principles, and in all the resulting details, it remains for the judgment of competent and meditative readers, to determine. But all such are, at the same time, intreated, habitually to keep in mind, that the present publication, is a posthumous one ; that, had life and health been spared to the Author, he would have explained, and supported his theory, by extensive researches, both

ancient and modern ; that a copious body of materials even now exists, among his papers, not only unused, but, from imperfect references, quite unusable ; and, that, had his own acute, and comprehensive mind, presided over a full exhibition of that scheme, which, for many years, he had meditated and planned, the result must have been far different, from any thing which is now brought forward.\* But, especially in his later years, infirmities were gathering fast upon him : in one letter to a friend, he writes, ‘ for some months back, I have been hearing with one ear, and seeing with one eye : ’ in another, what now seems like the language of solemn anticipation, ‘ The abortive Donnellans lie in my college-desk ; not to be disturbed again, at least, not by my hands.’ This sacred, and, he will add, this delightful duty, has unexpectedly fallen, into other, and, the writer fears, very incompetent hands : but this he can say, with perfect truth, that, if he were not convinced of the value, and importance, of these papers, he would never have proposed to undertake, what, to him, has proved a source of unmingled satisfaction, the office of their Editor.

About this time, Mr. Phelan became one of the six university preachers. He was not what is called

\* The publication of Dr. Phelan's Donnellan Lectures had been delayed ; in the hope, that the Author might be enabled to bring them out, with the advantage of extensive notes and references.

an orator, in the popular sense of the word : but he was a much better thing ; a calm, deliberate, and singularly impressive preacher. His voice was far from strong, or powerful ; its volume was thin, and its compass very limited ; but its tones were clear, animated, and flexible : his enunciation was distinct and solemn ; his face, when he was preaching, as when he was familiarly conversing, bore the stamp of zeal, earnestness, and pure affection. He thought that the natural variations of the eye, voice, and countenance, were the sole legitimate kind of action : the only one, suitable to the dignity of the pulpit. And the combined effect of his manner, his delivery, and that truth of character, which the most eloquent words, in themselves, altogether fail to convey, was, that, as Archdeacon Churton has beautifully said of Dr. Townson, .. ‘ You would pledge your soul on his sincerity : you were sure, there was nothing he longed for so fervently, as your salvation.’

Ten of the discourses thus preached, are given as specimens of Dr. Phelan’s peculiar manner. They were not prepared by him for the press ; and were composed in the ordinary discharge of his duty, as university preacher. Their matter, though perfectly practical and familiar, is distinguished, amidst all its simplicity, by the same profundity of thought, which characterizes his Donnellan Lec-



tures. While, in manner, they afford the happiest specimen, of united ease, and vigour ; of acute reasoning, and affectionate familiarity. But their great charm is, a certain air of reality, which everywhere pervades them : they insensibly twine around our hearts ; and, without the least effort at exhibition, of which, indeed, he had not the remotest thought, they set us at home, in the very scenes and circumstances, which they cause to rise graphically before us. Of our Lord's general character, especially as it may be 'pondered'\* out of the first few glimpses of his early life, the young preacher had a deep, and strong impression : and what he felt acutely for himself, he never failed to impress vividly on others. Of the discourses, those entitled 'Christ in the temple', 'Few notices of Christ's early Life', 'Jesus at Cana,' and those which immediately follow, to the Seventh Discourse inclusive, appear to the Editor, as, he doubts not, they will do to the reader, full of just, discriminative, and original observation : and, even in their present unfinished form, seem entitled fairly to take their place, (no common praise,) beside Dr. Townson's exquisite Sermon, 'On our Lord's manner of teaching.'

It would be alike unjust, and injudicious, to forestall the reader's interest, by any detailed notice

\* S. Luke, ii. 19.



of this portion of the ‘Remains.’ But, from amidst various passages of great interest and beauty, it seems right to select one or two brief specimens, which may, in some degree, illustrate the style and power of Dr. Phelan’s mind; and, as the writer thinks, the abiding influence of early circumstances upon it.

Very early in his first discourse, he has, with peculiar felicity, applied his knowledge and experience of humble life, to the elucidation of our Lord’s visit, in childhood, to Jerusalem, and its holy Temple. In treating of that remarkable occurrence, to which Saint Luke (chap. ii. ver. 46.) refers, Dr. Phelan observes, that, ‘The first circumstance which should be noted, is, the kindly and sociable spirit of the child Jesus. It is acknowledged, that, in the course of his public ministry, our Lord manifests a cordiality towards mankind, second only, to that unreserved devotement, with which he had surrendered himself to the business of his heavenly Father. And we may perceive, from the circumstances now before us, that this gracious disposition was the impulse of his tenderest, as well as the habit of his most mature years: ‘As they returned,’ says the Evangelist, ‘the child Jesus tarried behind in Jerusalem; and Joseph, and his mother, knew not of it; but, supposing him to be in the company, they went a

day's journey ; and they sought him among their kinsfolk, and acquaintance.' No sooner do they miss their precious charge, than they conclude, that he had mingled with the companions of their journey. This persuasion is no less firm, than it was instantaneous ; they travel a whole day, without faltering in their assurance. At length, they go in quest of him ; and where do they search ? Not in solitude, or in secrecy ; not, as they might have done for the austere Baptist, in a wilderness. They seek him, among their kinsfolk, and acquaintance, among persons, whose intimacy is generally more unreserved, in proportion to the humility of their rank in life ; and who were then, as we may suppose, beguiling the fatigues of a toilsome journey, by the free and playful interchange of confidential conversation. Now, we cannot imagine, that Joseph and his mother, were careless of the treasure committed to their keeping ; or, that, in their search for him, they were guided by no surer principle, than indiscriminating surmise. Their conviction, that he had mingled with their friends, was natural, and reasonable ; but it could not have been so, had it not been suggested by his ordinary conduct.' page 127, 128.

He thus beautifully touches on the poverty of the blessed Jesus : . .

‘ We are, generally, and incidentally, given

to understand, that our Lord was poor ; yet, no images are presented to us, which can excite mean and vulgar associations. There are, perhaps, only two instances, in which his poverty is pictured distinctly to the mind. These are, the scene of his nativity, and that mournful expression of his, that he had ‘not where to lay his head.’ Now, in the first of these cases, the associated ideas, are all even of unearthly magnificence ; the stable of Bethlehem, is transformed into a holy tabernacle, where the wise and great come to offer their incense, and angels themselves, attend, in humble ministration. And, as for the pathetic expression of the son of man, there is a majesty in its pathos, which exalts our conception of the moral sublime. We hear nothing, but what is fit to fall from the lips of persecuted royalty ; we see nothing, save what a wise heathen, has pronounced the noblest sight, even for God to see, . . a great and good man rising superior to adversity.’ Disc. iii. p. 160, 161.

The susceptibility of our Lord, unmingled with a single shade of weakness, is pictured, with happy discrimination : . .

‘ In the most highly gifted among men, that temperament, by which the soul is softened, to imbibe the influence of genius or of sensibility, generally weakens the severer moral powers. In

Christ alone, both are united, in their full perfection. He feels all our infirmities, yet he yields to none. He, no less than John the Baptist, is inclined to lonely meditation. He does not disdain to contemplate, even the lilies of the field ; yet, he can move unwearied and undisturbed, amidst the tumults, and anxieties of public life. Unlike John, he is courteous : but his is, always, the courtesy of a superior being ; the serene grandeur of sovereign dominion. He calls, and public officers rise and follow him : he appears, and rich young men kneel down to him, and call him master : he comes into the synagogue of his own town, and the eyes of all the congregation are fastened upon him : he is silent, and no man durst question him : he speaks, and the people wonder at the gracious words which proceed out of his mouth.' Disc. iv. p. 175.

How these passages, (and, in the discourses of Mr. Phelan, there are many such,) may affect the reader, it is impossible to predict. To the editor, it must be owned, they appear the mingled growth, of native temperament, of indigenous habit, and, he will add, of the triumphant grace of God. At an early period of this memoir, it was intimated, that the subject of it was 'never vulgarized,' that, he was, in principle and manners, 'a native gentleman.' I will now add, from long experience and observation, that he became more, and more, a

devoted, but a happy christian : and my wish, serious as though it were my last one, is, . . Sit mea anima cum Phelano !

It now seems proper to revert to Dr. Phelan's state of feeling, on the occasion of fellowship-examinations in 1817. From the extracts already given, of his correspondence (p. 39.), it is evident, that he was neither sanguine in his hopes, nor elated by his success. To some, indeed, it may almost appear, that he had attained, or affected, the tranquillity of stoical indifference. Far different, however, was the real case : and, in order to place it fairly before the reader, we must recur to other passages of the same letters. In that of April 12., he tells his friend, ' I am not happy : nor can a fellowship make me so : ' . . and, on June 5., three days after having apparently realized his most ardent hopes, he emphatically writes, . . ' At present, I feel myself very far from happy.' The fact is, (and this will, at once, explain all seeming contradictions,) that, during his visit to Dundalk (p. 32.), his affections had been irrevocably engaged, to a sister of his friendly host. And, although, during his continuance in Londonderry, prudence, and principle, and voluntary devotedness to his parents, allowed him not to think of an immediate marriage, . . yet, he was not without hopes, that some settlement might offer, compa-

tible with the attainment of his dearest wishes. It is not wonderful, then, that a fellowship, which, so long as it should be retained, must, probably, doom him to hopeless celibacy, was any thing rather than an object of complacency, or self-gratulation. He literally, therefore, had not wished to succeed. And, when, most unexpectedly, his efforts were crowned with success, his great object was, if practicable, to emancipate himself, by a royal dispensation. To accomplish this purpose, powerful efforts, were, at different times, fruitlessly employed. But the sudden death of the young lady's natural protector, determined him, at all hazards, to resign his fellowship, and fulfil his honourable engagement. Accordingly, on the eighteenth of May, eighteen hundred and twenty-three, he was married, on the licence of the Lord Bishop of Ferns, to Miss Margaret Stubbs, by her brother, the Reverend J. H. Stubbs, Vicar of Kilmacahill, in the church of that parish. Within the time specified by law, he subsequently resigned his fellowship, on the twelfth of August, in the same year; having received, from the Provost and Senior Fellows, a generous engagement, to extend to him the future privilege, of option to a college-living. Nor, should it be omitted, for it is highly to their honour, that the Junior Fellows voluntarily relinquished their claims, to any emolument accruing from his late

pupils ; not only, for the remainder of the current year, but, so long as they might continue their names upon the college books.\*

The connection thus disinterestedly formed, greatly augmented his happiness ; and probably, also, contributed to the extension of his short, but valuable life. His delicate health demanded the most tender care ; and this, Mrs. Phelan delighted to administer, with all that noiseless assiduity, which attends every step and movement of an affectionate female. Her principles, tastes, and habits, were in complete accordance with his own ; and, for years before their marriage, she had been the faithful depositary of his inmost thoughts, and feelings. But the privacy of such a correspondence, is too sacred a thing, to be needlessly violated ; fragments of but one letter, have been committed to the writer ; and, as these are, at once, beautifully simple, and throw a vivid light upon some particulars of his life and character, . . I shall give them without scruple. They seem to have been written, from his native town, or its immediate vicinity ; and I envy not the heart of that man, who can read them, without emotions that he would wish to cherish for ever : . .

\* For this fact, I am indebted to the information of the Rev. Dr. Wall ; at that time Junior Bursar. The sum thus liberally ceded, was above 900*l*.—J. L.



. . . . ‘ Have you not remarked, that the religious world, is, after all, *the world* : and has the scripture marks of the world about it ? It is, constantly, substituting things external, and adventitious, for things internal, and essential. A dogma, or a ceremony, or a public meeting, or any thing else that the times may countenance, is sure to take the lead, of ‘ Righteousness, and peace, and Joy in the Holy Ghost.’

‘ In the more immediate circle, at present, of the church establishment, . . a dogma is the rage. Did it ever occur to you, to note the opposite conduct of our Lord, in regulating his family ? No less than four times, in the first three chapters of St. Luke, it is said, that his mother and Joseph did not know the import of expressions, relating to him and his kingdom. We are not told, that he even gave them any particular information. In general, it is to be observed, that the truths, facts, and persons, of the Gospel, are revealed to us, as objects of the affections : they are addressed to the intellect, only so far, as every object of the soul must pass through the perceptive powers to the heart ; when there, they are at home, no matter how they effect the passage. All dogmatists pass their time in examining, and, as they think, repairing, the road to the intellect, and getting pre-sentiments for short cuts, &c. &c. Thus, like our

Irish highways, they are always *a repairing*, never *in repair*. Meanwhile, the heart is cut off from all valuable communication, with that gracious, but mysterious Being, who is, ‘a God, that hideth himself’ indeed, from ill-directed inquiries, but who delights to abide, with the humble and contrite spirit, ‘full of grace and truth.’

Such, I firmly believe, was his indwelling with your father : it was not manifested, by any direct exhibition of religion ; but it was known by its effects ; known, as a refreshing and purifying essence, which makes an atmosphere of sweetness, around the place where it is concealed.

‘ Cherish, then, those feelings about your father ; which become you, equally, as a child, and as a christian. In the present trying moments, they will console you : and, through life, they will serve as those auxiliary lights, which the gracious order of Providence kindles, from time to time, for the guidance of the pure in spirit ; so that, they count it all joy, when they fall into tribulation.

. . . . .

‘ There is one quality, both of my mind, and of my heart, to which, I do not believe, you have much adverted ; that is, their *youthfulness* : they promise to grow ; to shoot out blossoms and fruits, for years to come. And, even in that stage, when nature shall indicate, that we are shortly to remove

to another state of being, I trust, that I shall still retain a buoyancy of spirit.

.....

‘ The most grateful moments I can enjoy, are those, in which I feel myself of value, to the few whom I really love. The feelings I have towards that dear old man my Father, are experienced, I believe, by very few sons ; at least, by none that I ever knew, to the same degree. And, I cannot describe to you the delight I felt, when I saw his face tinged, again, with the freshness which I used to observe on it, in my childhood.

.....

‘ I have been travelling these one-and-twenty years, and never saw so rich a harvest ; it is called a *war-harvest*: the common people having a persuasion, that pre-eminently good seasons introduce war, or some other calamity. Such is their theory of the balancing of good and evil, in this *wady-buccady* \* world.

‘ The character of the people, in this country, appears to most advantage, in times of calamity. When above immediate want, their vivacity is apt

\* See-saw, up-and-down : a game, in which two persons, seated on the extreme ends of a long piece of timber, supported, in the centre, by a fulcrum, at once, balance each other, and are alternately elevated and depressed, by that motion which they communicate.

to become insolent ; and their proud spirit breaks into turbulence. But, in distress, the common Irishman is meek as Moses. The loss of health, wealth, friends, all, in a word, that our nature deems most valuable, is met by him, with the ejaculation, . . ‘ Welcome be the grace of God.’ They see the correcting hand of providence, in every visitation ; and receive it, as an act of mercy.’

.....

On finally leaving College, in August 1823., Mr. Phelan’s first settlement, was, at the curacy of Keady, in the Diocese of Armagh. This situation, had, for several months, been kept open for him, by the kindness of the Lord Primate : and gave promise of that literary leisure, which he keenly relished, but never allowed to run to waste. ‘ Here,’ said he, to an early intimate\*, ‘ I can complete my attainments, as a scholar and divine : all that I want, is a library.’

Just at this time, however, the Professorship of Astronomy at Armagh, became vacant ; for this situation, Dr. Phelan thought it right to apply : but he learned, that, two days before, it had been conferred on Dr. Robinson. At this appointment, he was far from repining : on the contrary, he was satisfied, that it did the Primate much honour. In

\* The Rev. Richard Ryan.

that particular department, Dr. Robinson's reputation stood, unquestionably, at the very highest : and the choice has been amply accredited, by the opinion of scientific Europe.\*

Mr. Phelan's habits had, hitherto, been those of a severe student. And he was better calculated for the literary and preceptive, than for the more active departments of his calling. His health was exceedingly infirm ; and he was often unequal to those laborious out-of-door exertions, the vast importance of which he strongly felt. But his best energies were faithfully devoted to the spiritual improvement of his flock. He had, hitherto, appeared in the pulpit, almost exclusively, before a learned audience. And his discourses had been adapted, always, to satisfy the requirements, of cultivated minds ; and often, to rivet the attention, of profound thinkers. It now became his duty, to adopt a different style of preaching. And it is an encouraging fact, to all persons similarly circumstanced, that, in adjusting his discourses to the capacity of his humble congregation, he was quite successful. He had not, formerly, been more remarkable for the eloquence of thought, than he now became for primitive simplicity. He seemed

\* The Observations of Dr. Robinson, have been more numerous, and have excited greater attention, than those made at any other Observatory, within the same period.

to preach under the habitual conviction, that ‘ A pastor is the deputy of Christ, for the reducing of man, to the obedience of God.’ \*

On ordinary occasions, it was not his habit to commit to writing the entire of his sermons ; he used, merely, to note down his principal topics ; for he felt, that a northern congregation especially, would be more interested and impressed, by conceptions, reduced, at the moment, to words, than it could have been, by any more elaborate process of composition. But his discourses were quite free, from the usual defects of extemporaneous addresses.† The thoughts were always lucidly arranged ; for the subject-matter had been thoroughly digested. He never ascended the pulpit, without an awful sense of ministerial responsibility ; nor, willingly left it, without having enforced, at least, some one religious truth, in a novel and interesting manner. His learning was so attempered by sua-

\* George Herbert. Country Parson.

† ‘ In this whole discourse, [the Sermon on the Mount],’ said Mr. Wesley, ‘ we cannot but observe, the most exact method, that can possibly be conceived. Every paragraph, every sentence, is closely connected, both with that which precedes, and that which follows it. And, is not this the pattern, for every Christian preacher ? If any, then, are able to follow it, without any premeditation, . . well. If not, . . let them not dare to preach, without it. No rhapsody, no incoherency, [whether the things spoken, be true or false,] comes of the spirit of Christ.’

vity, that the people delighted in him, as a teacher ; while his parental concern for their welfare, endeared him to them, as the tenderest of friends.

With true humility of mind, he united a strong, and even lofty spirit of independence. He loved, rather to confer, than to receive, a benefit ; and could, with difficulty, be induced to incur a personal obligation. This the Primate well knew : while, at the same time, he was apprehensive, that on moving to the curacy of Keady, Mr. Phelan must necessarily require some pecuniary aid. He, accordingly, took an early opportunity, of calling at the curate's humble residence ; and, after some general conversation, delicately hinted at the expences, which must, almost inevitably, beset a new-married man ; expressing a hope, that he might be permitted to become his banker. Mr. P., with very fervent acknowledgements, assured his Grace, that he did not, at that time, stand in need of such assistance ; but promised, that, should any emergency arise, he would, without hesitation, avail himself of it. The Primate, still persevered : ‘ You cannot,’ said he, ‘ be aware, how many demands on your purse must now be answered ; Mrs. Phelan, too, must want several articles of comfort, which your present means may not be able to supply.’ Mr. P. respectfully declared, ‘ That he was unconscious of any want, for which he was not already



provided.' . . 'Come, Phelan,' says the Primate, 'you must want a horse.' The reply was, 'My Lord, I have two.' . . 'Well, then,' his Grace added, 'you will excuse my importunity, . . but, . . the remittance to your father, have you thought of that?' . . 'My Lord,' said Phelan, the tears of gratitude in his eyes, 'I have not forgotten him; before leaving Dublin, I took care that he should not want.'\*

These last, were far from words of course: in a confidential letter to a friend, dated August 18. 1823, he thus unbosoms himself: . . 'If I have means enough to continue my usual allowance to my father, I am perfectly satisfied.'

'Filial piety,' it has been said, at the commencement of this memoir, 'was, with him, almost an instinct.' And the fact is illustrated, by an affecting entry, found in one of his note-books; to which, Mrs. Phelan says, he was fond of alluding. It is simply this, . . for it would seem never to have been wrought up, into regular composition, . . 'The emotions of filial piety, perhaps the nearest approach that nature gives, to the love of God.' Now, his own conduct shows the high sense which he ever

\* Dr. Phelan related this conversation, to a friend: and the editor could not suppress a circumstance, so richly biographical. He must, therefore, at once, throw himself upon the indulgence of the eminent individual, who, above most other men, 'does good by stealth.'

entertained, of both sacred ties : and the analogy is the more beautifully striking, as coming from the lips and heart, of such a son, and such a christian. The sentiment of natural affection, in him, was sublimated into a feeling, which had ‘ less of earth in it, than Heaven.’ This was the animating soul of all his efforts, from the first moment that such efforts could availably be made, for the securing of his parent’s worldly comforts : it was the most remote thing possible, from the callous and rigid payment of a debt, involuntarily contracted ; and, an indescribable emotion of mingled reverence and love, from early childhood, to his latest hour, would seem to have been, above most others, the master-affection of his soul. ‘ I can never forget,’ says Mrs. Phelan, ‘ the manner, in which, on receiving a letter, or other tidings from his first home, he was wont to say, . . ‘ How I love and venerate that dear old man, my Father!’ ’

By the kindness of his family, the writer possesses copies of letters, addressed to that ‘ dear father’ by Dr. Phelan, almost from the year of his entrance into College, to the year of his death : from these, I now propose to insert extracts of a small number, not selected with any very curious nicety ; but evincing, as, indeed, all the letters do, the affectionate and wholly unselfish character of his nature.

Dublin, December 23. 1808.

Honoured Sir,

How different is our situation this Christmas, from that, with which we were usually blest ! It is, indeed, a gloomy change ; but still, it is our duty to receive the change, as a visitation from the Almighty : for, ‘whom the Lord loveth, he chasteneth.’ Let us learn, to bear our present humiliation with patience : and the Lord will, no doubt, reward our perseverance, in a manner beyond our expectations.

Your ever obedient Son,

WILLIAM PHELAN.

April 28. 1809.

Honoured Sir,

I have just happened to receive the enclosed, and I hasten to remit it to you. My endeavours to do without it, will be facilitated, by the sweet hope, of its being useful to the best of parents.

Your ever dutiful Son,

W. P.

Dublin, April 13. 1810.

Honoured Sir,

Enclosed, I send you share of another prize, which I obtained, at the time I took my degree. It was for English verse ; the first time I

made any attempt that way: and, luckily, I have been very successful. I also, on the same day, got the gold medal\*: so that, for a while, I am pretty well supplied with college honours. I know you, and my dear mother, will be glad to hear of this: so, I have told you every thing that has happened to me.

I hope, my dear father, that, whenever you find yourself weakened by work, you will stop, and indulge yourself. I am young, Sir: *my* work is not so hard as *yours*; and I should be ashamed to hear, that he, to whom I owe my life and my education, should labour too hard, while I have the means of furnishing assistance.

Tell my mother, that I am not, nor ever shall be, forgetful of her tender care of me: and believe me, dear Sir,

Your ever grateful Son,  
W. P.

Trin. Coll. Oct. 15. 1820.

My dear Father,

Once more, I must deny myself the pleasure of taking a trip to Clonmel. My entrance to-day, was only two pupils: and this is too small, to allow of any more travelling for the year. I wish very much, that you would lay out the en-

\* See page 15., *ante*.

closed upon yourself. This day three weeks, I shall send as much more : which can be used for the family purposes.

I shall send the spectacles, by the first opportunity.

Believe me, my dear Sir,  
Ever your affectionate Son,  
W. P.

Trin. Coll. Oct. 7. 1821.

My dear Father,

I wish very much, that you would, immediately, have the flannel waistcoats made. Give up one pound, to the purpose ; and I shall be sure, to make it up to you. Take care, and make yourself comfortable, this winter. It can make the difference of only a very few pounds to me ; and, I hope, it is needless to say, that, for such a purpose, I do not value a few pounds.

Your ever affectionate Son,  
W. P.

Trin. Coll. Nov. 20. 1822.

My dear Father,

I beg you will employ the enclosed, in some articles of comfortable dress, for yourself, and my mother. Do not think of my being a little embarrassed for money ; my difficulty, on that account, will be but for a short time : and my

uneasiness would be, beyond comparison, both heavier, and longer, if you wanted any thing which I could procure.

W. P.

Trin. Coll. Oct. 25. 1823.

My dear Father,

It has just occurred to me, that I have neglected you sadly as to money matters. To remove all such inconveniences in future, I shall make it a rule, please God, to pay you quarterly. You shall have, as long as we all live and do well, twenty-five pounds, on each of the following days, &c.

W. P.

Tuesday (1829).

My dear Father,

I do not know how to address you, at this afflicting time. Our darling B—— is gone to a better world ; but you must feel the loss of her society deeply. However, it would be selfish, as well as presumptuous, to murmur at the will of Him, who is the Father of us all.

I send the enclosed, for the purpose of buying mourning ; it is right, that we should pay every respect to the memory of that sweet creature, who is gone from us.

Ever, my dear Father,

Your most affectionate Son,

W. P.

3. Lower Merrion Street, Dublin,  
March 11. 1830.

My dear Father,

It will grieve me excessively, if I should discover, that you have been denying yourselves any thing comfortable, from reluctance to call upon me. Indeed, I am never satisfied, when I see, or hear, that you do not take all the care you ought of yourselves ; or do not attend to those little supports of life, which your state, and that of my mother, requires. You cannot but feel, that I would count nothing within my power, too much for your use, &c.

Ever, your affectionate Son,  
W. P.

Dublin, March 25. 1830.

My dear Father,

It mortifies me, more than I can express, that I find it quite impossible, to accompany Catherine to Clonmel. Various things conspire, to make it necessary for us to leave Dublin, very early next week : and many preparations are to be made, before we can set out. All these causes compel me, to let Catherine travel alone. But, I live in hopes, that I shall see you, before the summer is over ; and that I shall find you, and my dear mother, improved by the fine weather.

You will perceive, by what Catherine brings,



that I am still in your debt. I trust that I shall be able to pay you. With my best love to my dear mother,

Ever, your affectionate Son,

WILLIAM PHELAN.

This was *his last* letter to his father : and gives delightful evidence, that something far tenderer, and more sacred, than mere family affection, was triumphant, even to the close.

But a touching incident yet remains. The heavy expences of his last illness, had drained his purse ; and, for some time, he had been unable to remit his father's allowance. Unexpectedly, there came in, for the renewal of a lease, five-and-thirty pounds. ' Let that, immediately, be sent to my father\*,' said Dr. Phelan, ' I have been in his debt too long.' It was enclosed, accordingly : and his sister observing his extreme weakness, was about to direct the cover ; but he said, quickly, ' Give me the pen, . . if he saw any other hand-writing than mine, the dear old man† might think me worse than I am.' Within three days, he breathed his last !

\* Here was, precisely, the same spirit, which dictated the memorable saying to his brother, sixteen years before. See page 21, *ante*. J. L.

† Dr. Phelan's usual phrase, when speaking of his father, amidst his own family.

Next spring, (1831.) Miss Phelan writes, ‘ My father is pretty well, considering his infirmities : he bows, with submission, to the will of our heavenly Father. But the tears roll down his aged face, whenever William is mentioned ; and, sometimes, when alone, he speaks to himself, in Irish, about his darling.’

In April, 1832., Mr. Phelan, senior, was in his eighty-sixth, and Mrs. Phelan, in her sixty-ninth year.

It is, perhaps, very generally felt, that the most natural and affecting letters of Pope, Warburton, and Hurd, are those dictated by filial piety. But, in genuine pathos and simplicity, they are far excelled, by several of Dr. Phelan’s. We are continually reminded of those exquisite lines, which few sons have equally realized : . .

‘ O friend, may each domestic bliss be thine :  
Be no unpleasing melancholy mine :  
Me, let the tender office long engage,  
To rock the cradle of reposing age ;  
Explore the thought, explain the asking eye,  
And keep awhile BOTH PARENTS from the sky !’

From 1823., to 1829., Dr. Phelan’s favourite, and more congenial studies, were often interrupted, by various political discussions of the day. To dilate on such subjects, is foreign from the purpose of this memoir ; and, (may the memorialist be allowed to add ?) from the habits of his own life.

Therefore, as has been already intimated, I shall here confine myself, to the simple mention of his chief treatises, in the order of publication : . .

1. Essay on the subject, proposed by the Royal Irish Academy, ‘ Whether, and how far, the pursuits of scientific and polite literature, assist or obstruct each other?’ 1813. Re-published in the present Volume.
2. ‘ The Bible, not the Bible Society.’ 1817.
3. A Letter to Marquis Wellesley, on ‘ The Case of the Church in Ireland : by Declan.’ 1823. DECLAN was the name of the first Bishop of Ardmore, in Ireland : traditionally a member of the family, whence Dr. Phelan was descended. Not published, till after the author had withdrawn from College.
4. The same. Second Edition, much enlarged. 1824.
5. A second Letter to the Marquis Wellesley, under the same title, and signature. 1824.
6. ‘ A Letter to William Wilberforce Esq.’ Suggesting some alterations in Mr. Goulburn’s Tithe Composition Act. 1825.
7. ‘ A Digest of the Evidence, taken before the Committees of both Houses of Parliament, &c. in 1825.’ Vol. II. The first Volume of this work, was drawn up, by the Rev. Mor-

timer O'Sullivan. Both he, and Dr. Phelan, had been previously examined, before the Committees. The Digest was brought out, in March, 1826.

8. 'History of the Policy of the Church of Rome, in Ireland, &c.' 1827. This work, forms the second Volume of the present publication. It is given, not as a controversial, but purely as an historical discussion: and it is hoped, that, when temporary excitement shall have subsided, it may be studied with advantage, by persons of every description; and not least, by members of the Church of Rome.
9. Two Letters, from a Clergyman in Ireland, to his friend in England. 1828.
10. 'Remains, &c.' 2 vols. 8vo. 1832.

On the 26th of May, 1824., he was appointed, by the Primate, to the Rectory of Killyman, in the Diocese of Armagh. His announcement of this event, (to him, certainly, an important one,) bespoke a singularly well-balanced mind. He had been writing on other subjects, and at some length, to his friend Mr. Ryan, when he thus proceeds: . . . 'This morning, his Grace presented me with a very well-circumstanced living, and unincumbered with any claim for building. I have now, thank God, an immediate prospect of competency; after a total demolition of my affairs, within the course

of the year. I am deeply grateful to Providence ; but not elated : on the contrary, my mind is quite still, and motionless.’

Killyman was eligible as a residence, in several respects ; in none more so, than its vicinity to Armagh. Thence, Dr. Phelan was enabled to pass many agreeable, and many useful hours, in communication with the Primate : whom, it would be impossible to say, how deeply he revered. And there, along with Archdeacon Stopford, and the present Dean of Armagh, the Primate being generally present, he acted as examiner for holy orders. An important office : by him, most faithfully discharged ; for none felt more acutely, its weighty responsibility.

He succeeded, in virtue of the arrangement made with the Provost and senior Fellows, to the Rectory of Ardtrea, in the gift of the University of Dublin, about the 23d October, 1825.\* His pecuniary circumstances now gave promise of becoming easy ;

\* The income of the two parishes, has been accurately reported to me ; it appears that Killyman produced about 850*l.*, and Ardtrea 950*l.* per annum. From this amount, is to be deducted 400*l.*, allowed by Dr. Phelan to his Curates ; and, at least, 150*l.* for the expences of collection, &c. From the charges of faculty, outfit, furniture, &c. he was just beginning to emerge ; when it pleased God to remove him. The delicate state of his health, put a life-insurance out of the question. It was not even so much as attempted ; nor, indeed, in his circumstances, would the attempt have been honest.

and had his life been spared, for a very few years, he might have provided competently for his family. It is, however, but fair to say, that his *mere acquaintances* were apt to think him ambitious ; and it needs not be concealed, that he, sometimes, seemed to view with complacency, the possibility of, at a future day, obtaining a more prominent place in his profession. But the present writer, speaking from some knowledge of facts, and after much deliberate thought on the subject, does not hesitate to say, that Dr. Phelan's ambition (no modification of which, can be perfectly, or abstractedly, right,) was, at least, quite free from selfishness ; that he regarded station in the church, not as an end, but as a means of usefulness ; and that the prevailing disposition of his mind, was, to perform faithfully his own immediate duties, and leave events confidently, and unreservedly, in the hands of God.

The testimony of my friend, the Rev. Charles Forster, so perfectly accords with my own experience, that I cannot allow myself to suppress it ; and it is the more valuable, I conceive, because it is given in his own unpremeditated words, taken down exactly as they were spoken : ‘ In October, 1825., . . I saw Dr. Phelan in Dublin, immediately after he had succeeded to the living of Ardtrea. It was the last opportunity I enjoyed, of his confidential conversation. The sentiment uppermost in his

mind, was a lively sense of the goodness of Providence towards him. He introduced, of his own accord, . . the mouth manifestly speaking out of the abundance of the heart, . . the great cause he had for thankfulness ; expressed, with a look of thoughtful calmness, his gratitude, at finding himself in a situation beyond his deserts, and fully equal to his desires ; and concluded, by observing, that he had nothing more to wish for in this world ; but, had every reason, to be contented and happy.’

In July, 1826., he proceeded D.D. ; and, immediately after, was appointed, by the Lord Primate of Ireland, his examiner for faculties ; this office, however, soon virtually ceased ; the primate having, greatly to his honour, declined to grant any more faculties.

From the spring of 1827., [with the exception of his two letters to a Clergyman, &c., and a few essays in the periodical Journals,] he did not publish : he seems to have resumed, for some time, his earlier pursuits with unabated delight. He read Plato, and the philosophers of his school ; Kant, and the chief metaphysicians ; nor was he wholly inobservant of the new system in progress, among men of letters in France. But the Scriptures were his real and profound study. He estimated the best human productions, only, as, by correspondence or by contrast, they served to display the



surpassing excellence of God's word: and he thought our present intellectual systems, *therefore* incomplete and uncertain, because they are formed, not in accordance with, and subservience to, that all-perfect rule. He, soberly, was of opinion, that, when philosophy should condescend, to become the humble disciple of Revealed Religion, she would make the most rapid advances, and commence a new era of metaphysical science. 'If ever,' he was used to say, 'there arises a NEWTON, in the philosophy of Intellect, he will be a man profoundly acquainted with the BIBLE.' Here, he was satisfied, are the principles of all knowledge, that has man for its object: and, in the society of his chosen intimates, whatever might be the subject of conversation, it never failed to terminate in considerations drawn from the sacred writings; or rather, he very soon proved, that, by the light of Scripture, it could best be elucidated and expanded. To his theological studies, therefore, he drew all that was really interesting, in every literary pursuit: and, as his acquaintance with the Bible grew more profound, it became more and more evident, that, from thence, he was continually deriving new, and striking thoughts.

Meanwhile, it was manifest to his anxious friends, that his bodily health was rapidly on the decline. The symptoms were, perhaps, first, and most dis-

tinctly, observed by himself: thus, so early as the month of October, 1825., he writes to a confidential friend: ‘ I am beginning to have fears, of another kind: which I do not like to detail on paper, but which occupy a great portion of my secret musings.’ Again, on the 19th of Nov. 1826.: ‘ As for myself, I am certainly not well. My power of enduring study is greatly reduced; and my susceptibility of cold increases, to a most uncomfortable extent.’ In the summer of 1827., his feelings were yet more distressing: July 16., he says, . . ‘ I am very low, with respect to my own state. For the last six years, I have had, occasionally, an intermitting pulse, which, at first, was said to be nervous. But, I was given to understand, that, unless it were mastered by exercise, and tranquillity of mind, it might ultimately turn out to be organic. It was diminishing, up to last winter; so much so, that I had begun to hope I had mastered it: but my long confinement then brought it on, to a very serious degree. Common sense agrees with the physicians, that a disease, which attacks, so directly, the seat of life, must be treated with very respectful attention. I have been ordered, and I intend obeying the precept, to give up my books and scribbling, and devote my care to my health. The great difficulty, I feel, is, how to avert my thoughts from my own state,

when I am not occupied in studious thinking. I find, that, minute care about myself increases the agitation of my pulse ; and, from the long-formed habits of my life, I do not know any way of diverting my thoughts effectually, but by engaging in some settled scheme of mental occupation. This last, however, every one agrees in condemning. I had designed, by this time, to have commenced a series of . . . . ; but it will not be allowed. The worst of the matter is, that, I really believe, the irksomeness of want of settled employment, is as bad for me as work.' His spirits, towards the close of this year, appear to have been nearly overwhelmed ; he writes, . . December 1. 1827., ' A History of the ancient Church of Ireland, has been one of the many things, upon which my thoughts have dwelt : but this, as well as all the rest, must now be postponed ; perhaps, for ever. The state of my pulse and nerves, renders application to study perfectly impossible : and, as, in these cases, mind and body re-act upon each other, I see no reasonable prospect of improvement. An occasional sermon, will now, probably, be the measure of my labours, for the rest of my life. I attend to myself very carefully ; rise at six o'clock, am systematically temperate, read very little, and go out, whenever the weather permits. My great desideratum is, the want of society : the society, I mean, of men

with whom I might converse, upon those topics, which are now part of myself.'

The very evening of the day, in which this melancholy letter was penned, he had a serious attack of pleurisy : and, after five weeks' close confinement, he was not able so much as to reach the hall-door. The utmost exertion that he could make, was a gentle walk about his study : and his friends were desirous, that, when his strength should be tolerably returned, he would consent to vary the scene. The general feeling on the subject may be collected, from a letter written at the time. 'Ardrea, Jan. 25. 1828. Most people here speak of the Cove of Cork, as the most desirable retreat for me ; the doctors say, an excursion, and idleness, without any particular destination ; and though last, not least among my advisers, the Primate recommends a trip to Dublin.'

To that city, therefore, he removed, in the winter of 1828-9 ; medical men having concurred, in ordering a removal, from the cold, damp climate of the north, to a more genial atmosphere. While he continued in Dublin, he, apparently, grew much better ; but, no sooner had he returned home, than the affection on his lungs became more distressing ; and he was medically forbidden to preach, or perform any part of divine service. Shortly after, he was afflicted with a violent palpitation of the heart,

which forced him to give up his usual exercise ; a short ride or walk, causing him much embarrassment.

Just before his return, he addressed to his brother-in-law a letter, which throws some interesting light upon his character : ‘ Dublin, Feb. 23. 1829. My life here is one of perfect seclusion : except, so far as going occasionally to a news-room, or to the College chapel on Sunday, may be called going into society. I see \* \* \* \* but seldom ; and scarcely ever dine out. You will be surprised, at all this ; but it is, because you have mistaken my character, and disposition : for, though I have, or rather *had*, somewhat of a lively manner, with my very few close intimates, there is no one of a really more retiring turn. I dwell too much among my own thoughts, to have either the power, or the will, to make myself acceptable to many of those around me. There is much of this, that I would not change, if I could ; for I am satisfied, that the world is a very heartless affair. In some instances, however, I am quite aware, that my shyness, or sullenness, or whatever else it may be called, is downright infirmity.’

Towards the close of 1829., he again went to reside in Dublin : not, however, with any very beneficial effect. A Physician of great eminence

interdicted, not merely preaching, and performance of all parochial duty, but any continuous writing, and study of whatever kind. The tone of his mind was unusually depressed : but, to me, the most affecting thing of all, is, the rich vein of imagination which was continually breaking forth ; evincing, even in his most morbid state, the supremacy of mind over matter. Thus on the 17th of Oct., he writes to his friend Mr. Ryan : . . ‘ I am, indeed, very low : and the worst of it is, that the mind has sunk into a kind of lethargy, from which I have no power of rousing it. My faculties are not gone : for, sometimes, when I dream, I can energize as well as ever, and am busy in discussions of various kinds ; but, while awake, they go to hide from me, and all my efforts cannot bring them out of their holes. The cause, I suspect, is to be found in a morbid excess of bile, which I have been secreting. I remember to have seen, somewhere, that a man’s understanding is very much in his stomach : and, from my recent experience, I believe it to be true.’

Yet, even at this period, his mind was, frequently, as much alive as ever, to his intellectual improvement and pursuits : thus, in a letter to his early associate, Mr. S. O’Sullivan, dated Dec. 17. 1829., he says, with his usual modest estimate of his own

powers, . . . ‘ I opened an old sermon of my College days, yesterday ; and was disappointed greatly at the execution, though the thoughts are good. You ought to give me a lecture in composition ; I hope to be soon able to profit by it.’

The extracts lately given from Dr. Phelan’s correspondence, are evidently fitted to leave a far less lively impression, than the just one, of the habitual frame of his mind and spirits. But they were, for the most part, written at times of illness and depression ; and they have been selected, for the express purpose of showing, that, even then, his feelings were such, as one alike qualified to live, and prepared to die, would willingly cherish, at the approach of ‘ the inevitable hour.’ They were chiefly written, to that bosom-intimate\*, by whose kindness, I am enabled to characterize them, in Dr. Phelan’s own words : . . . ‘ I have laid open my reveries to you, in the same rambling, unreflecting manner, as if I had been thinking aloud, and by your fire-side. To you, I write of myself, because I am sure, that what concerns me, is not uninteresting to you. There is no one, to whom I dare behave so.’ His last letter to his chosen friend, written on the twenty-ninth of May, just seventeen

\* The Rev. Richard Ryan.



days before his death, has these words, . . . a characteristic close of such a correspondence : . . . ‘ I have been greatly cheered, by your last two letters : and I look forward, with impatient anxiety, to your promised visit. The circle of our friends narrows so fearfully, as we proceed in life, that the affections gather, with intensity of regard, round the few that remain, within the little inclosure. W. P.’

In April, 1830., his brother\*, who, for nineteen years, had, with anxious fondness, been watching each expressive variation of his countenance, saw in it, on his return to the country, the signs of fast approaching dissolution. On May the twenty-fourth, he went to the Chapel-in-the-woods, one of the churches of Ardtrea, nine miles distant from the rectory, to hold a vestry. The day was wet, and tempestuous ; he sat, for several hours, in damp clothes ; and, as might have been anticipated, took a severe cold. On the twenty-eighth, the injurious effects became sadly apparent : a distressing cough, extreme difficulty of breathing, total sleeplessness, impossibility so much as to lie down. Mrs. Phelan, finding that the means prescribed wrought no abatement of suffering, now proposed, that he should go to his brother’s at Killyman ; for, she

\* The Rev. James Phelan, then curate of Killyman, now Prebendary of St. Audoen’s, Dublin.

had often been led to remark, that the society of that dear relative, in his affection for whom, were blended the feelings of a brother, a father, and a friend, had, commonly, a salutary effect upon his health and spirits. He went accordingly. On entering the house, he first saw Mrs. James Phelan ; towards whom, he had ever felt, and showed, the truest brotherly affection. To her he said, with that playful seriousness, which, in him, was quite characteristic, ‘ Harriette, I am come to die with you.’ This was on the sixth of June. For the next three days, in the course of which, he took two airings in an open carriage, some hopes were entertained of his recovery ; his cough was more infrequent, his breathing less embarrassed, and he had a little sleep. But, on the tenth, all the old symptoms returned, with aggravation : and a new symptom appeared, which seldom fails to prove an immediate forerunner of dissolution. Still, however, on the eleventh, he ventured, supported by his brother, to take a short walk in the garden : and next day, he was up a little while. But, at nine o’clock A. M., on Sunday, June the thirteenth, he expired, without the slightest struggle. To the last, he retained full possession of his mental powers : and exercised, with unabated vigour, the kindest of human affections. Nor is it presumptu-

ous to hope, that, through the merits and mediation of a Divine Redeemer, he is gone to that state, where the aspirings of a purified spirit, shall not be weighed down, by the pressure of a mortal body.\*

It may, perhaps, be expected, that the writer of this memoir, should add somewhat in the way of character. But he trusts, that, from almost every page, may be collected his estimate, of this excellent, and extraordinary young man. And, happily, Mrs. Phelan has put into his hands, a paper, drawn up by herself; the faithful result of fifteen years' intimacy with his whole mind and heart. This, I will give, almost as I received it: and I think its beautiful simplicity far more eloquent, than the most laboured panegyric. Here, then, I close my biographic labours. And I cannot but express my fervent wish, that many may be induced, not merely to admire, but to emulate, the virtues and the spirit,

\* At four o'clock in the afternoon, of June 15. 1830, his remains were deposited, in a vacant space, where the old church had formerly stood, in the grave-yard of Killyman. A numerous body of clergy, and a vast concourse of people, assembled at the funeral. His brother, the Rev. James Phelan, and his brother-in-law, the Rev. J. H. Stubbs, were mourners. The funeral service was read by the Rev. Richard Horner, Rector of the neighbouring parish of Drumglass; who pronounced a very instructive, and affecting address, at the grave.

of Dr. Phelan. For my own part, I feel, that my responsibility is, in no slight degree, increased by the long and close inspection of such mature goodness.

JOHN LIMERICK.

East-Hill, Wandsworth,

May 21. 1832.

## MRS. PHELAN'S PAPER.

‘ On looking through his earliest manuscripts, it is evident, how entirely, from the beginning, his mind was directed towards the one great end of our being. Even in these unfinished papers, it is an office of delightful interest, to trace the progressive history of his fine mind : to see it, from tenderest youth, to maturest manhood, continue to expand, and give forth fresh promise ; till, at length, it burst forth from its earthly incumbrance, as we may humbly trust, to enjoy heavenly converse, in a state of unalloyed purity.

His many note-books, and even the smallest shred of written paper left behind him, testify the fulness of that mind, and its ever-budding freshness ; each beautiful thought seeming to contain matter for a volume. While inspecting such documents, my heart is lifted up, in adoration of the great Creator ; who alone, can give such faculties to man, with the power, and the will to use them.

The sweetness of his domestic qualities shone, in beaming tenderness, through his manly nature ; rendering him, in all seasons, whether of labour or repose, a most delightful companion. Delicacy of

constitution, and unintermitting devotedness to literary pursuits, enhanced his natural love of home-quiet ; but never, for a moment, relaxed his ever-working powers of thought.

Except when labouring under very distressing illness, he was not merely cheerful, but animated, and full of the joy even of childhood. Often have I seen him, after dancing and singing with his little children, . . suddenly throw himself into his chair, take up his note-book, and write, exclaiming, . . ‘ I have worked up a good thing for my book.’ And thus, frequently, some of his happiest, and most exquisite thoughts suggested themselves to him, amidst the full enjoyment of his delighted little family circle.

Abstractedness, therefore, so usual an accompaniment of literary habits, was never to be detected in him. He was present to every thing ; always ready to take a part in conversation ; and felt a lively interest in whatever was going forward. Even when engaged in the closest and deepest application, his intercourse with his family was not suspended : the amusements of his children did not interfere with him ; their presence and enjoyment gave him pleasure ; reading aloud interrupted not the train of his thoughts ; music seemed almost to assist them ; and, in the midst of intense study, he would pause to answer the simplest question,

in a manner equally full of encouragement, and affection.

But, whenever information of an instructive kind was asked for, he delighted, especially, in giving it; and never failed to do so, in that happy style of brevity and clearness, for which he was remarkable: replying with readiness and interest, as if the particular subject in question had exclusively engaged his thoughts; and, on such occasions, his countenance and manner told what pleasure he felt, in communicating knowledge. Indeed, whenever he spoke, his air was animated and joyous; and so thoroughly was information, at once general and deep, diffused throughout his mind, that he viewed the most ordinary subject in an uncommon light; and unconsciously excited new trains of thought, in the minds of those around him. In his hours of necessary relaxation, he ever combined wit with instruction, and philosophy with mirth: and playfully imparted those treasures, which he had laboriously accumulated, by severe study. Above most other men, he possessed the happy faculty of teaching, without appearing to dictate; and he continually enlightened the circle which revolved around him, unconscious that he was himself the luminary, in whose beams they were rejoicing.

His general manner was simple and unpretend-



ing ; he never assumed the air of conscious superiority ; but, ‘ possessing that prime knowledge, which consists in knowing, how little can be known,’ he was, at all times, too deeply occupied with the beauty and tendency of the idea, to dwell, for a moment, on its mere origination. The same unaffected demeanour marked him, whether in the pulpit, in private discussion with his friends, or in the more general conversation of mixed society. I never heard him speak, on any subject, whatever its apparent difficulty, without feeling, that I could, in some degree, at least, find my way through it. Such was his lucid clearness, and concise, though beautiful method of reasoning. And, perhaps, the best evidence of a great mind, is that power, of simplifying food for the feeble-minded.

Devotion to his beloved studies, but too often, and in many ways, affected his bodily health. At one period, he became subject to a distressing complaint, in one of his eyes. To this, however, he never yielded, till acute pain made it indispensable, that the organ should have rest. At these times, he was in the occasional habit of dictating, from the stores of his mind, that which another reduced to writing. In the latter years of his life, he had repeated attacks of this nature ; succeeding each other, with so short a respite between, that, but

for that active energy of mind, which never forsook him, he must have sunk under mere physical depression. When suffering in this way, he has often dictated various portions of his works; arranging long passages in his mind, as he walked through the room; and repeating them with great accuracy and clearness, while one of his family wrote them down, for his future correction. And at times, when able to use his eyes, but much hurried in composition for the press, he has worked double tides; at once dictating to an amanuensis, and rapidly penning some other part of the same treatise.

It has been well observed of him, that ‘he lived two lives in one.’ The quickness of his apprehension enabled him to acquire knowledge, in a far shorter space of time than most persons: while this faculty served but to stimulate his exertion, and excite an appetite for fresh information, never to be satiated in the present stage of existence. In his favourite study of theology, he laboured, with a persevering ardour, perhaps seldom excelled, or even equalled. And the result gives a fresh instance of the fact, that a sincere and humble search after truth, directed by a clear intellect, and aided by solid learning, is always productive of a self-conviction, which, generally, draws others to the same belief. In fact, Dr. Phelan had read

more than enough to unsettle the minds of many acute, but unballasted, unstable half-thinkers; while, to him, inquiry never failed to produce a deeper, and more principled conviction of the great truths of the Gospel.

No person, indeed, could be more deeply impressed with a sense of man's utter helplessness, in his unassisted state. Therefore the humility of his faith was of the most profound character. But he felt what noble things, restored, and re-created man is capable of, and intended for. Therefore he continually aspired, through Divine Grace, after the renovation and improvement of his fallen nature.

His conception of our Lord's character was so perfectly lovely, that, where we might have dreaded to approach, we are attractively drawn forward; and gratefully behold Divinity itself, embodied in the Redeemer of our souls. By ever keeping before him this Model of perfection, he was gradually becoming conformed to His image; and he truly, and habitually, 'walked humbly with his God.'

For two or three months previous to his final separation from us in the flesh, the idea of his own approaching dissolution seems to have been familiar to him. I had an opportunity of observing this, especially at one particular period; when,

from a recent confinement, and the interdiction of all study, he became acutely nervous and sensitive. About that time, too, he was seized with an alarming numbness, in one of his arms ; attended by a shock, similar to that of paralysis. During the continuance of this attack, which lasted about an hour, he appeared to undergo a great mental struggle ; the agonizing conflict bringing tears to his eyes. At length, the power having returned, of shaking off this weakness, by a violent effort, he was quite overcome by the gracious relief : and immediately withdrew to his own room ; where he remained alone, for upwards of an hour. Then he rejoined his family, with more than his usual cheerfulness ; and with a heavenly serenity, which seemed newly *given* to him.

The last week of his mortal being, cannot, while I remain after him, be severed from my thoughts ; the recollection of it fills me with heart-felt gratitude to the Most High. From the great difficulty of breathing under which he laboured, it was a period of almost unintermitting suffering ; fits, nearly of suffocation, came on continually during the night ; frequently, too, during the course of the day. But his equanimity, patience, and reliance on the Divine Mercy, never, for a moment, forsook him. His resignation to the Divine will was meek, and unvaried ; his whole

manner showed this; and the few consolatory words, which, at any time, he uttered, were evidently designed, but, to relieve the agonized feelings, of those who witnessed his sufferings. The night before his departure, he called me to his bed-side: and, in the beginning of his little address, his countenance and manner bore an almost playful animation. I am now fully persuaded, that glimmerings of the glory so soon to be revealed, were, at that moment, dawning on his mental sight, and even giving him bodily ease, while he spoke to me these comforting words :..

‘ I am greatly relieved by the bleeding, thanks be to God! And, though I have, indeed, had a very violent attack, yet I feel, as though I had, still, a sufficiency of strength, with God’s help, to bring me through. And now, go over, and lie down in your bed, with a full confidence in the power of the Almighty. I will call you to me, when necessary. Pray for me: giving Him thanks, for all his mercies to me. There never was any one, who had more abundant cause for humble gratitude.’

Then, nearly exhausted, his words gradually became indistinct: and from mental prayer, he sunk into a calm and childlike sleep. These were the last words of consequence, I ever heard him utter. But if, at any time, upon its separation

from the body, a spirit has been blessed with the foretaste of immortal peace, . . and if it be not presumptuous to indulge in the delightful confidence, . . may I be enabled to rest in sure and certain hope, that his Soul is numbered with the blessed!

M. P.'

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London, April 1832.

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